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PAT MULROONY'S PARD.

BY EMERSON RODMAN.



"IF YOU COME A FOOT NEARER, I'LL BLOW DAYLIGHT THROUGH YOU, YOU INFERNAL DECOYS!"

Pat Mulroony's Pard;

OR,

HEZEKIAH SMITH, THE BACKWOODSMAN.

BY EMERSON RODMAN.

CHAPTER I.

COMRADES OF THE FOREST.

"HAOW dew you dew, Cap?"

"Fine, yer honor; and how is yerself?"

A tall, spare specimen of the backwoodsman, who was sitting by a smoldering camp-fire, had arisen and grasped the hand of a genial-faced Irishman, who was also clad in the habiliments of the forest.

"My name is Smith, Hezekiah Smith," said the former. "What is yours?"

"Pat Mulroony, lately from Tipperary, Ireland, may it pl'ase yer honor."

"Haow did you—how was it you came to find me, if I may be allowed to inquire?" asked Smith, peering round in his face.

"I was jist thraveling through the forest, when I spied the smoke of fire, and says I to meself, says I, 'There's ayther some graan youngster, or a band of haythen, as doesn't care who saas their camp-fire,' and with that, I pokes around in the wood till I spies you cookin' your legs over the blaze, when I knows by the swate expression of yer countenance, that ye was a gintleman, and, bedad, I finds I was right."

"What might you be doing? What's your business?" pursued Smith, laboring under a great curiosity.

"Faith, I'm an *adventoorer*, as the convict said. I've been wanderin' in these parts for several wakes, without catchin' glimpse of a white skin, till I came upon you."

"That ain't what I mean. What brought you out here in the first place?"

"Me legs," replied the Irishman, decidedly.

"Just so, just so; if you've no objection, I'd like to know your *motive*, not meaning any offense at all."

"Begorra, but ye're axin' too much," replied Pat, with a shake of his head. "Nivir ye mind the *indooement* that I has for taking to the woods. If I may be so bold, what was the same motive that brought yerself here?"

"Nothing in particular—nothing in particular," replied Smith, as if the subject was distasteful to him.

It was plain that both of these characters had a secret history—a history which each determined should remain a secret with himself. The short conversation recorded above had been sufficient for this fact to become evident to both, and as if by mutual consent, neither made any further reference to it. It sufficed that they were white, civilized beings, wanderers in a dangerous territory, where neither, for an hour, could be assured of his own safety, and where both lacked the great safeguard of

experience. This was enough to make them firm and fast friends at once.

"Are you baound up or down the river?" queried Hezekiah Smith, referring to the Ohio, which was but a few hundred yards distant.

"Faith, it's little difference where I'm bound, as the man said when the haythen Injun bound him to the stake. How is it wid yerself?"

"I'm goin' daown."

"So is meself, if ye's willin' to accept of me company."

"I'm right glad to have you, for I care mighty little abaout goin' much further in this all-fired country, without some one to keep me company. It's the *ornnerest* piece of country I ever see'd in all my born days."

"As we agraas so well on the principles, be the same token, we'll agraa on the partic'lars. I'm thinkin' I've seen more of this country pra'ps than ye has yerself, but it's mighty litt'. I've seen, after all. But, be the howly pow ra, it's meself knows enough not to kindle a fire in broad daylight in these parts."

"But, Pat, s'pose you fall in the creek and get wet, as I did, how, in the name of human nature, are you to dry yourself?"

"Dry yourself, is it?" repeated the Irishman, surveying his friend from head to foot; "and what is it ye wishes to dry yerself fur? Bedad, you'll find, if you're long in these parts, you'll have to go wet and hungry more than once."

"About what time do you suppose it might be?" asked Hezekiah Smith, after a moment's pause.

Pat Mulroony squinted one eye up to the sky, as if he was looking at the face of a clock, and answered:

"It lacks an hour or so yet of noon. Are ye cravin' something to ate?"

"Oh ginger, no! S'pose we set out upon our journey, as I don't exactly see how we're goin' to gain anythin' by standing here?"

"Who laids the way?"

"I'll follow you, as you know more of the woods than I do."

Pat Mulroony struck out toward the Ohio river, closely followed by Hezekiah Smith. Each took long, regular strides, frequently snapping the twigs beneath their feet in spite of the care and caution exercised by each.

They were two noticeable persons as they thus pressed forward, each with a long, beautiful rifle slung over his shoulder, and each attired in a demi-savage dress. The New Englander, being some five or six inches the taller, was constantly peering over the shoulders of his leader, his curiosity being almost sufficient several times to make him take the lead himself.

They had walked some distance, when Hezekiah caught the shimmer of water through the trees, and knew they were approaching the Ohio.

Moving several yards further, they were almost upon the bank, when Pat Mulroony fell flat upon his face as suddenly as if his feet had been tripped from beneath, and Smith, perfectly dumfounded at this curious movement, gazed bewildered at him for a second. Then thinking he had fallen and injured himself, he

stooped to assist him to his feet. Motioning him off, Pat spoke rapidly, in a ghostly whisper:

"Drop down on yer face! hide quick! Down wid yel quick! quick! the devil himself is coming down the river."

This overwhelming intelligence caused Hezekiah also to "come down," as suddenly as the Irishman, and for a moment nothing but the deep breathing of each could have been heard. But at the end of that time, the curiosity of Smith began to show itself.

"What does he look like, Pat?"

"Did you ever set eyes on a tappin-snarkle?"

"Yes; one of them once bit half of my big toe off, when I was wadin' in a mill-pond."

"Well, bedad, when I cotched a glimpse of him, he looked like a tappin-snarkle, as big as a house."

The curiosity of Hezekiah Smith was roused to its highest pitch. Such a dreadful monster as had been seen by the Irishman, if coming down the river, must soon pass before his view also; and he accordingly lifted his head slowly, until he had raised it and his shoulders perhaps a couple of feet, when he suddenly dropped it again, as if a thousand-pound weight had fallen upon his head.

"Did ye see it?" inquired Pat, not daring to lift his own head.

"No; but I was afraid it might see me," replied Hezekiah, slowly raising his head again.

Taking courage from his immunity, Pat Mulroony gradually straightened his arm until he had brought his head nearly on a level with his companion's, when they both looked long and searchingly through the trees, but without discovering the satanic personage that had been announced.

While gazing thus, a sudden rushing sound was heard, and the heads of our two friends dropped so suddenly that Hezekiah bit his tongue sorely, and the chin of the Irishman dented far into the earth.

"Jerusalem! he hadn't wings, had he?" asked Hezekiah, turning his face around so as to speak to the Irishman.

"He was paddlin' when I saw him, and was too big to flit among th' trees here— Howly mother! there he comes ag'in!"

As he spoke, several quails sped overhead with that whirring noise peculiar to the bird. This explained the cause of their fright.

Familiarity with danger breeds contempt, and our two friends, gathering courage every moment, again raised their heads, and looked steadily and unflinchingly out among the trees upon the river. And while thus engaged, they saw what at first appeared to be a small house floating down the river. As it drifted slowly past, the two rose to their feet, and ventured nearer the shore.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Hezekiah Smith, with a sigh of relief, "that's what they call a flatboat."

"How do you know?" asked Pat; "ye says ye have never been in these parts, and how do you know what one is?"

"When I was at Pittsburg, I seen two set

out down the river, and they looked just like that."

"Be jabers! if it's a flatboat there must be some one aboard of it," added Pat, his countenance lighting up; "and if there's some one aboard of it, be the same token, there's a chance of our getting down the river."

Hopeful and joyous, both scrambled headlong down the bank with the brilliant idea in their heads. The flatboat was in the center of the current, and had the appearance of a square box; or, perhaps, a better idea of it could be given by comparing it to a cabin resting upon a scow, whose gunwales ran higher than usual on every side. A long, sweeping oar was hung at either end, for the purpose of keeping the vessel in the channel, and guiding it through eddies and dangerous passages in the river. Not a living soul upon it was visible.

"Drat the luck!" exclaimed Hezekiah Smith, after stumbling along the shore for several minutes.

"Be the powers, but we'll boord the craft, and take possession!"

Hezekiah caught at the idea, and had already stepped into the water to carry it into execution, when Pat, with an exclamation of astonishment and alarm, caught him by the shoulder and drew him back.

CHAPTER II.

BOARDING THE FLATBOAT.

THE cause of Pat's alarm was immediately manifest to Hezekiah. The head and shoulders of a man were visible on the flatboat, as was also the muzzle of a rifle he held in his hand. Thinking he was about to speak or fire, our two friends drew back and waited for his words. To their surprise, however, his head almost immediately disappeared, and their most urgent calls and entreaties could not induce him to show himself again.

By this time, the flatboat had drifted some distance below them, and they ran down the bank so as to recover their lost ground.

"We've got to boord it," said Pat, as they took their station.

"How is it to be done?"

"Why, you jist wade out and climb up the side."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I'll stay on the bank to cover your retreat if you gits licked."

"Cover my retreat," repeated Hezekiah, as if he found it difficult to understand the exact meaning of his friend.

"Suppose that man fires at me and kills me?"

"Be that token, Pat Mulroony will consider that it's dangerous for him to follow ye, and will retreat, like a wise ginerel, into the woods."

Hezekiah still debated whether it was his duty to run such a risk for the benefit of his companion or not, but finally compromised the matter by offering to carry him upon his back.

"The water ain't very deep," said he, "and

as my legs are a yard or two the longest, I'll keep you dry, and you'll run the same chance of being struck that I will."

"It's a bargain," said Pat, immediately mounting the back of Hezekiah.

For the convenience of the latter, the Irishman took the guns of both, and with his heavy load upon his back, Hezekiah Smith stepped cautiously into the river. He had entered it some distance below the flat-boat, so that he would have no trouble in intercepting it, and he now strided as rapidly as possible through the water.

He had gone perhaps two-thirds of the distance, and the water reached almost to his waist, when the head of the man on the flat-boat again appeared, and pointing his rifle over it, he called out:

"What do you mean by coming out here? I'll give you just two seconds to reach the shore again, and if you come a foot nearer, I'll blow daylight through you, you infernal decoys!"

Instead of turning round and retreating, Hezekiah ducked his head at this sudden command, so as to bring the Irishman as a sort of shield before him. Throwing him too far forward, the consequence was, that Pat went completely over his head into the water. At sight of this discomfiture of both, the man in the flatboat evidently concluded their presence could be of little danger to him, and accordingly called out:

"Come out to the boat, and I'll help you on board."

"Murther! Can't ye pick us up?" cried Pat, floundering through the water. It being very manifest that such a feat, under the circumstances, was impossible, our two friends made the best of their way forward, and upon reaching the side of the boat were assisted on board by the man who, a few minutes before, had ordered them away so peremptorily.

"Who are you?" he demanded, as soon as they had recovered breath.

"Patrick Mulroony, from Tipperary, Ireland, at your service, sir."

"Hezekiah Smith, also."

"Isn't there any one else ashore?"

"Not that we knows of. Are you the only one on these premises?"

"No, sir, you will see my companions shortly."

The speaker was a young man of rather prepossessing address, one who, to judge from appearances, was as much a stranger in these wilds, as our two friends, who have been already introduced to the reader.

He was attired in a plain, homespun dress, such as, at the period of which we write, were more often seen in civilized communities, than as far west as this portion of the Ohio. He had a keen, black eye, dark, flowing hair, a pleasant face, considerably embrowned, and bearing the unmistakable impress of a firm will, and iron determination. He scanned his visitors as they came aboard, and seemed to gather from a glance their character.

"If you've no objection, what might be your name?" asked Hezekiah, in his gentle, insinuating voice.

"Luther Waring."

"Eh, yes, just so; glad to hear. Ain't married, now, I dare say?"

"No, sir."

"Might be engaged, perhaps?"

"Yes; to tell the truth, I am," replied Waring, "and, if I ever get safely through this infernal Indian country, down to the settlements, I'll be married."

"Where might the—where might the lady be now?" pursued Hezekiah, evidently determined to get all he could out of Waring.

"She and her father are in the cabin, and, I suppose, will soon show themselves."

"What might be her name, now—that is, if you have no objection to telling me?"

"Certainly not," laughed Waring. "She is from the same village that I have left; and her name is Virginia; daughter of Mr. George Lander. Anything else that I can impart?"

"You are bound to the settlement, down the river, I suppose?"

"I have hinted as much; yes, that is our destination."

Hezekiah paused at this point, as he seemed to have run out of questions, seeing which, Pat Mulroony whispered:

"Begorra, ye isn't going to sthop in this place, be yees?"

The querulous New Englander placed the stock of his rifle a few inches from his feet, and holding his arms over the muzzle, seemed to be engaged in a deep study for a few moments. Suddenly, slinging his right leg around the other, so that it rested upon the tip of the foot, he turned his beaming face toward Waring and continued:

"Is the gal good-looking, now?"

Waring laughed outright.

"You shall be the judge, if you only wait a few minutes."

"Of course—of course—I only asked to—that is, I just asked."

"To find out," put in Pat, with a comical expression, as he looked down and surveyed his clinging garments.

"Do you wish to change your clothes?" asked Waring, who had noticed the furtive glance of the Irishman.

"There bein' ladies in the neighborhood, p'rhaps they might 'bjact, as, be the token that we have no clouthes to put on, our costume would be rather picturesque, as the man said when he came out from the river, and found a cow had ate up his garments."

"We can furnish you with something, I think."

"It's entirely unnecessary, entirely unnecessary," said Hezekiah, with a graceful wave of his hand. "The water is not cold at all, and the bathing was quite pleasant. But, I was going to ask whether the Indians had troubled you yet?"

"If you had examined the side of the boat as you came up, you would have seen several bullets imbedded in it. They were fired by Indians."

"Deu tell!" gasped Hezekiah.

"We paid no heed to them at first, in the hopes that they would leave us, when they found we were aware of their motives; but, as they kept following us, Mr. Lander and myself sent

several shots among them, that made them howl, and send volley after volley after us in return."

"They didn't kill yer?"

"They did no damage, as our boats were constructed with a knowledge of all the exigencies that might arise. How is it with yourselves?"

"I haven't seen an Indian in a long time," replied Hezekiah; "but I have smelt their camp-fires several times."

"I've saan plenty of the haythen," added Pat, "but have given them a wide barth, and so I'm plased to state, I've suffered no harm up to this point in the prosadings."

"I have never been in this part of the country before," said Waring, speaking in a more serious tone than he had used thus far; "but I am aware of the perils and dangers that encompass us. Our immunity from danger thus far leads me to hope for the best, as, from the knowledge that I gained before starting, the settlement, which is our destination, cannot be more than twenty miles distant, near enough for us to reach it to-morrow, if nothing unexpected occurs. I must say, however, I am filled with considerable misgivings. We are in the most dangerous point of the river; and I cannot help thinking that the crisis will come to-night. I am indeed glad that you two have come on board."

"Thunder! so am I," said Hezekiah, "for I was lost in the woods, and was beginning to get seart. We are bound with you for the settlement. Hello!"

At this juncture the cabin-door opened and a man, some sixty years of age, made his appearance. He was very gray, with a feeble, attenuated frame, and the air of one who, for years, had not seen a day of perfect health.

Waring immediately introduced him to the Irishman and New Englander, the former grasping him heartily by the hands, and the latter scraping his feet very elaborately, as he returned his pressure.

The face of the elderly personage was careworn, and he spoke but a few words, merely expressing his pleasure at meeting his two friends when he returned to the cabin.

Hezekiah Smith was just on the point of asking a question concerning him, when the cabin-door again opened and Virginia Lander made her appearance. She had the same black eyes and hair as her lover—a bright, hopeful expression of countenance, singularly in contrast with that of her parent, and a nervous restlessness of manner, such as is often seen in the mere child. She was not beautiful, but she was handsome, and inspired every one in her favor. Waring immediately introduced her, as he had her father. Hezekiah retreated a step or two, lifted his hat from his head, and was just in the act of making another sweeping scrape with his foot, when she brought these preparations to an end by taking his hand, speaking her pleasure, and turning to the Irishman, and doing the same.

"Extremely happy to meet you," said Hezekiah. "If you've no objection, I would like to know—"

"Be the powers! but look yonder jist!" inter-

rupted Pat, pointing down the river. "What does that mane?"

Waring had already caught sight of the suspicious object and turned to Hezekiah.

"What do you make of it?"

"A lot of Indians, as sure as thunder

CHAPTER III.

THE SHADOW OF DANGER.

"It's a canoe—one of them infernal Indian ones," added Hezekiah. "I know enough of 'em to be sure of it."

The object in question was close under the Ohio shore, and at the distance when first seen, might have been mistaken for a common log; but Waring, who had learned to regard every such manifestation with suspicion in the Indian country, was convinced that it was something more the instant he caught a glimpse of it. Besides, Hezekiah was positive, and if any individual was competent to judge in regard to the identity of such a vessel, his experience, as related at the commencement of this tale, should certainly have pointed him out as that man.

If there were any lingering doubts in the minds of the whites, they were instantly set at rest by seeing the canoe put out from the shore, and head across toward the Kentucky bank. The tufted heads of three Indians were visible, and their paddles flashed brightly in the sunlight, as the frail vessel shot swiftly over the surface of the water.

"I didn't mane to alarm yees, but maning no offence to the iligant lady present, might I venture to suggest in the mildst terms possible, there'd bish be none but *men* on deck jist now."

"He is right," said Waring, in a lower tone to our heroine, "it is best that you go below."

"I will do so, if you think I should," she replied, suiting her action to her word. "Do you wish father to come up?"

"There is no need of it."

The girl closed the door and Waring turned toward his friends.

By this time the canoe had nearly crossed the stream. A few moments later it glided under the Kentucky banks and three Indians sprung out.

It was with peculiar emotions that the inmates of the flatboat gradually came opposite this canoe. They had just seen three of their deadly enemies withdraw under the protection of the shrubbery and undergrowth of the shore, and they had every reason to believe that there were others in the vicinity.

"It can't be that they are friendly," suggested Waring, who was all but certain that such could not be the case.

"Friendly divils!" repeated Pat Mulroony. "Every mother's son of 'em is in the war-paint, and they'd sooner scalp all of us, not barring the lady—God bless her. Talk of friendly Injins in this part of the worruld!"

By this time, the flatboat was opposite the canoe, whose stern could be distinctly seen underneath the dense shrubbery that lined the bank. The conversation ceased of its own accord, and the three men carefully lowered their heads, so that no stray shot could reach them. In the sides of the boat were one or two small

orifices, which Waring had had perforated for the purpose of gazing out, just at such times as these, and our friends used them on this occasion.

Looking out, Hezekiah discerned through the interstices of the undergrowth the forms of two crouching Indians, their eyes glowing, their faces all agleam with ferocity, and their be-daubed visages ten times more horrid in appearance than he could have dreamed it possible for a human being to be.

When just fairly abreast of them, a jet of fire was seen to flash among the shrubbery, and as the sharp report of a rifle broke the stillness of the woods, a bullet grated over the top of the flatboat, and was plainly heard by all, as it plainly cut its way through the leaves on the opposite side of the river, with that peculiar zip-zip made by the rapid passage of a stone or other object through the trees of a forest.

"By the Howly Virgin! take that!" exclaimed Pat, springing up and discharging his rifle at the spot where he saw the faint wreath of smoke curling upward. "How does that faal?"

"They haven't felt it at all," whispered Waring. "Be careful and keep your head out of sight, or you'll be struck."

"How do you know he wasn't struck?" demanded Pat, in high dudgeon. "Did you see the passage of the bullet?"

"A wild Indian always yells when a bullet hits him, and they haven't made the least noise."

"Begorra! but you're right. I've struck a red-skin afore to-day, and he always screamed like a painter. It was an uncomfortably close rub, faith, for all that."

Both shores were closely scanned, but nothing more of the savages was seen; and after drifting half a mile or so down-stream, our three friends ventured occasionally to show their heads to any who might be lingering along the banks. This, however, was a dangerous proceeding almost at any time, and as there was no necessity for it, it was not often done by any of the three. The reason why Waring was not visible when Hezekiah and Pat first hailed the flatboat, was not because he did not see or hear them, but because he had prudence enough to keep himself out of sight.

By this time the afternoon was considerably advanced, and Waring invited his two friends to descend into the cabin and partake of the dinner, which Virginia Lander had just announced.

"And who stays above, if I may be allowed to ask?" inquired Hezekiah, with an anxious expression of countenance.

"I do myself; have no apprehension upon that score."

His alarm thus quieted, Hezekiah hesitated no longer.

In the cabin he found a plain, substantial meal prepared, to which he, Pat, Mr. Lander, and our heroine seated themselves. The elderly personage besought the blessing of God upon the food spread before them, and spoke not another word during the meal.

Great as was Hezekiah's hunger, his curiosity was equally great, and, accordingly, as

he masticated the food, he kept his eyes rolling continually about him in search of knowledge. He noticed that the cabin was divided into two compartments, one of which he naturally concluded was devoted to the exclusive use of the young lady who presided at the table. Several times he was on the point of asking permission to take a look into this. But his sense of propriety prevented him, and he devoured his victuals in silence.

As for Pat, he was hungry—that was sufficient. Excepting the food itself, nothing presented the least attraction to him, and he devoured this with a gusto that put to shame the achievements of the others.

The meal finished, the two returned to the deck, and took the place of Waring, while he partook of his dinner. As our friends looked out upon the still, solemn forest, and the placid, unruffled river, down which they were so noiselessly gliding, they could hardly realize that the profound silence that then held reign was as treacherous as the calm which precedes the marshaling of the storm-king's forces upon the ocean. And yet they well knew that within the depths of this wilderness lurked the Indian, whose life was devoted to the one object of exterminating the white race; that he was as cunning and crafty as years of war and bloodshed could make him, and that no means would be left untried to encompass the death of themselves and those with them.

"Hezekiah," said Pat, upon whom this impressive scene had not been entirely lost: "have you ever been in these parts before?"

"Never in all my born days, and I wish to Heaven I wasn't here now."

"What's the trouble now? Begorra, ye isn't scart, be yees?"

"Yes, Pat, I ain't ashamed to own it—I am scart. I tell you, 'twixt you and me, there's danger hangin' over this craft. I can smell it in the air, I can feel it in my bones. If we don't see trouble afore to-morrow morning, then I'm most mightily mistaken."

"I incline to the same opinion, though I wouldn't be saying it afore the lady down there, and frightenin' the wits out of her. I'd like to know, be the same token, what that old curmudgeon is doin' on this boat?"

"You mean the old man? I should think it would be the last place for him. Never mind, Pat, let come what will, you and I stick together, don't we?"

"Of course we do."

There is nothing that will make friends as soon as a sense of impending danger hanging over both. Let two entire strangers meet under circumstances like these, and in ten minutes they will be on as good terms, and devoted to each other, as though they had been bosom friends for a dozen years. The cause of this is very plain—it is the interest of both to be so.

Hezekiah thought he had never met so fine a fellow as Pat Mulroony: one, whose kindness of heart was so great, and whose friendship was disinterested; and as for the Celt, although he did not express himself thus, his opinion of the New Englander was very nearly the same.

"You asked awhile ago," said Hezekiah, after

a moment's pause, "whether I had ever been in these parts. If you have no objection, I should like to know whether you have been here?"

"Yes, I was about this place last summer with a party, but we didn't go any further down the river."

"I understood that you were further west than you had ever been before; but then I might have been mistaken. If you have no objection, I should like to hear the particulars of your visit."

"Can't tell it now," replied the Irishman, as though the subject were distasteful to him.

At this moment Waring made his appearance, and was shortly followed by Mr. Lander, who, taking a seat near the cabin, maintained a strict silence during the conversation of the others.

Hezekiah merely glanced at the young man, and saw, as if by instinct, that the same sense of impending danger that so troubled himself, was shared by him also. There was an anxious expression upon his countenance that he had not seen there before; a certain restless nervousness in his manner, which he sought in vain to conceal.

"We are going to have a dark night of it," said he, looking up to the sky.

"As dark as Egypt," added Hezekiah. "I recollect that I nearly battered my brains out, last night, in trying to walk through the woods."

"The moon will not be up till three o'clock in the morning, and, I might as well be plain with you, friends, it will be life and death with us before that time."

"Just what we're thinkin'. Drat the Indians," exclaimed Hezekiah. "I can feel it in my bones that I am going to get into a scrape to-night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

THE night gradually closed down upon the flatboat. Upon inquiry, Hezekiah found that their elderly companion, Mr. Lander, instead of being an assistant to them, was an incumbrance. A confirmed invalid, he was barely able to remain on his feet for more than a few moments, and had expressed the wish only that he might be allowed to reach the settlement and die.

He was totally unfit to handle a rifle, and had not attempted it for years, so that, although Waring had another weapon besides his own, it may be stated that he started upon this expedition entirely alone—a proceeding, that in its foolhardiness, was unaccountable.

As Waring had predicted, the night proved of intense darkness.

In a few hours, both shores became entirely invisible, and shortly after, it was almost impossible to see the length of the boat. Under these circumstances, it was proposed to work the flatboat in to shore, and tie up for the night. All were totally unacquainted with the windings of the river, and they were fearful that they might run aground in the darkness, and be unable to get the craft afloat again. They were pretty certain, too, that they had been con-

stantly watched from the banks, and that it would not be long before the Indian canoes would be ranging up and down the river in search of them.

If this were the case, their only plans of escaping them, would be by sweeping in to shore, and remaining there until the moon arose. On the other hand, it was hardly probable that the flatboat could approach nigh enough to the shore, to gain any protection from it.

The water was so shallow, that it was likely to ground when several rods distant, in which case, the situation of the fugitives would be far worse than if attacked while in the midst of the channel. And besides this, they also ran the chance of being discovered, even if they should reach the bank without grounding.

The savages would be passing up and down the shore; and as it would require considerable effort and some noise to work the lumbering concern out of the course it was pursuing, the trained ears of the red-skins could hardly fail to detect it.

All these considerations being taken into account, it was decided that, for an hour or two at least, they would keep their position in the midst of the channel.

The greatest cause of alarm, as we have before hinted, lay in the fact that not one of the whites in the flatboat was acquainted with the river.

They were drifting aimlessly downward, only conscious of their general direction. The Ohio river abounds, as all our readers are aware, with numerous islands, and many of these lying directly in the middle of the stream—our friends had good cause to apprehend running upon one of them.

The flatboat had a long oar swung at either end, by which its motions were controlled, much in the same manner that the rafts which descend our rivers at this day are managed.

To guard as much as possible against the calamity mentioned, Hezekiah Smith and Pat Mulroony passed to the forward part of the boat so as to be ready not only to sheer the boat off when "breakers" were discovered, but to be prepared for any venturesome Shawanoes that might choose this as their point of attack.

Mr. Lander and his daughter remained below, as both well knew their presence would be of no assistance to those above; and the whites were thus disposed when the incident we are about to describe took place.

Hezekiah stood leaning over the prow, listening intently for the least evidence of the approach of their enemies. The only sound as yet heard was what might be characterized as the *audible silence* of the forest—that deep, solemn roar, like the distant voice of the ocean, that is as eternal as the great sea itself.

Now and then the melancholy night wind moaned through the tree-tops with a dismal and lonely voice, in consonance with the feelings of the three listeners; and once or twice the far-off scream of some denizen of the forest was borne faintly forward to their ear.

Then again the silence became so profound that the soft ripple of the current could be heard against some projecting root or dipping branch,

But these sounds were all natural to the wilderness and excited no emotions, except to add to the dreary loneliness of the scene.

The New Englander had stood in the attitude of attention for more than an hour, when he detected the cautious dip of a paddle. He instantly raised his head and peered out in the direction from which it came, but in the Stygian darkness could detect nothing at all. He maintained the same attitude for full an hour, during which he heard the sound repeated twice. Fully satisfied that strangers were in the vicinity, he gave utterance to a suppressed whistle, to place Waring on the guard, and leaning toward Pat he asked in a whisper whether, if he had no objection to tell, he had detected any suspicious sound.

"There's a haythen canoe that has been following us for the last hour or more, or my name isn't Pat Mulroony."

"Hist! there it is again!" admonished Hezekiah, arching his neck and gazing out in the darkness.

Both listened, but Pat failed to hear that which had startled his companion.

"They're mighty oncareful is them same Injins," added the Irishman. "Whisht! but look! there's the divils this minute!"

As he spoke, Pat sprung up in great excitement and pointed out on the river. Looking in the same direction, Hezekiah caught the outlines of a long Indian canoe filled with shadowy figures, which glided under the prow of the flatboat, and came to rest as noiselessly as a phantom.

Almost at the same instant a tufted head appeared above the gunwale, but it was crushed like an eggshell by a tremendous blow from the clubbed rifle of the Irishman. This was scarce done when the head and shoulders of another rose within a foot of where Hezekiah stood.

"Take that, you thundering red-skin!" he exclaimed, striking him a terrible blow square in the face, that sent the dusky savage spinning out in mid-air with the blood spouting from his nostrils. "Dern your picter! what business you got poking your head up here? I say, Waring, the Indians have come—look out for them."

In his excitement Hezekiah Smith dropped his rifle, and springing up and down as though the deck had suddenly become red-hot, he delivered his fearful blows indiscriminately, while Pat kept his rifle swinging like the arms of a windmill.

"Begorra! but the shillelah comes natural to the Tipperary boys!" he exclaimed between his set teeth, "and Pat Mulroony was born with one in his hand, and has been trained up to the illigant profession of breaking heads. Some of ye will go home to night with bootiful faces, barrin' yer won't have any faces at all to go home with."

The Indians had evidently not counted upon a surprise, and were not prepared for the furious courage with which they were received. They had followed the flatboat until they judged the inmates were either asleep or off their guard, when they had come upon them in the stealthy manner narrated. The consequence was that in

less than five minutes after the attack, the canoe had disappeared with the surviving Shawanoes, and nothing was heard save the slapping of Hezekiah's feet as he still sprung up and down the deck, and swung his arms around him ready for the next bronzed head that might offer. It required Pat some time to convince him that the danger for the present had passed, and there were no more enemies to contend against. By degrees he became quieted, and was able to converse rationally when Waring made his appearance among them.

During all this tumult Lander had not shown himself, nor even so much as given evidence that he felt the least concern at the conflict going on. His daughter, when the firing had subsided, cautiously opened the door, and called the name of her lover. He instantly assured her that the savages had fled, and besought her to return to her room. First receiving a hurried but fervent kiss upon her blanched cheek, she complied, imploring him to be careful and not expose himself unnecessarily to danger.

A silence as profound as that of the tomb, succeeded the onslaught of the savages. Some minutes later, the noise of paddles was again heard; but, as Hezekiah had, by this time, gained his equilibrium of mind, and was convinced that the Shawanoes could not immediately attempt the same stratagem in which they had so signally failed, he returned to his place beside Waring, leaving the Irishman alone at the bow of the boat.

"If you have no objections to tell me," said Hezekiah in his usual insinuating voice, "what do you propose to do, now that we are in the midst of danger? How, in thunder, are we to get out?"

"I am afraid," replied Waring, "that the Indians are constantly ranging up and down the river, and so long as we remain in the channel we are not safe."

"How do you propose to get out of the channel?"

"Let us work the craft in to shore, and wait till the moon rises before starting. Thinking that we are in the middle of the current, they will not look along the bank for us, and we shall thus be safe until we can see where we are."

It was Waring who first proposed to run in under the protection of the bank, and he had never once doubted its expediency. He advocated it now so earnestly that neither Hezekiah nor Pat made any objection. Accordingly, the long, sweeping oars were dipped deeply and silently into the water, and under the powerful impulse of the sturdy-armed men it began gradually veering off toward the Ohio shore. The greatest caution was exercised, as the creaking of one of the sweeps might tell any savages in the vicinity what the whites were doing. This was a delicate task, but our friends believed they were succeeding as well as they could wish. All at once, the dark line of trees were discovered through the darkness, and ceasing their efforts, the boat continued approaching, until the branches brushed over their heads, and the bottom, striking the mud of the stream, the forward motion of the craft was checked.

The whites had every reason to be pleased

with their situation had not a slight accident caused them a little anxiety. As Pat Mulroony attempted to shove a limb from before him, it broke with a cracking noise that could have been heard across the river. This caused so much apprehension, that for a time, Waring was on the point of working the boat out into the current again; but, finally, his fears subsided, and he concluded to remain in his present position until the rising of the moon. The flatboat lay about ten feet from the mainland, and had grounded so slightly that had it not been secured by tying it to one of the branches ahead, it would have floated off again. This was the precise situation in which Waring had been anxious to get it; and, excepting the slight accident alluded to above, he had every reason to be satisfied with the state of affairs. The darkness was so great, and the peculiar position in which the craft lay so favorable, that no Shawanoe would have discovered it in passing within a dozen feet of it had not his suspicion been first attracted to it.

The three whites remained on deck, now and then whispering to each other, and passing on tiptoe from one portion to another, but nothing more of their enemies was seen or heard for a long time.

Pat Mulroony was leaning over the prow, as he had been leaning for the last hour, and was looking down in the water, when he discerned a dark, ball-like object moving along the surface. At first, he took it to be a piece of floating wood; but, as it passed around the prow, in a manner that the motion of the current could not have caused, he was not long in identifying it. It was the head of an Indian.

Communicating this fact to Waring and Hezekiah, the hold on the branch was loosened, and under the additional impulse of the oars, the flat bottom was once more floating down the Ohio.

CHAPTER V.

GROUND.

THE whites on the flatboat had committed a mistake natural to persons in their situation.

As they waited along shore, in the most painful suspense, the hours wore slowly away, and seemed double their usual length. Thus it happened, that at the moment of sweeping out into the current, each believed it to be about three o'clock in the morning, and were looking for the appearance of the moon, when, in reality, it was barely midnight.

Waring and Pat experienced some peculiar sensations, as they toiled at the oar. Knowing that one Indian, at least, had discovered their hiding-place, they had every reason to believe that a whole war party were aware of it, and so long as the shadowy outline of the shore was discernible, they were in constant expectation of receiving a volley from their invisible foes.

But, as the dark mass of trees blended with the night, and at length faded from their view altogether, they ceased their efforts, and breathed freer.

"Now," said Waring, "I don't care how soon the moon shows itself. With all the

windings and islands, we need light to see the way."

"If you have no objections, I should like to inquire how soon do you expect the moon to rise?"

"Why, right away—that is, within a few minutes."

"So it seems it ought to do; but, Waring, don't you know how much longer time seems to persons in our circumstances, than it does at other times? I know when I used to court Jemima Hopkins, after ten o'clock, the hour didn't seem more than ten minutes long; and then again, when I had to sit up in the winter, and keep the wolves out of the sheep-pen, every hour seemed a month long. Now, Waring, I don't want to hurt your feelings—it may be three o'clock in the morning, but I don't believe it."

"I know how apt we are to miscalculate time on such occasions, and I have tried to make allowance for it. With all that allowance made, it strikes me that the moon must be in the horizon by this time."

"I hope it is so; but the best thing we can do, is to calculate as how it ain't gwine to be there for some hours yet and making our arrangements accordingly. Eh, Waring?"

"You are right, I admit. In fact, we can do nothing else. We are going it blind now—knowing only that we are going down the Ohio."

Do you think, that is, if you have no objection to tell, do you think that these Indians will try the same method of attacking us?"

"It is not to be supposed they will, unless their party is large enough to insure them victory. Nevertheless, we must be on the lookout for their devilments. I say, Pat, ahead there, don't forget to keep a sharp lookout for mischief."

"Ay, ay, that I will, barring it isn't possible to look out at all. Be the Holy Virgin! I see something now, sure."

Hezekiah was at his side in an instant. Looking ahead, he saw a dark mass looming up in the darkness directly before them, as if it was approaching.

"It's one of them islands," he exclaimed. "The all-fired thing is afloat, and is running into us. Quick, Waring, the oar."

As he spoke, he and Pat seized the sweep of the oar, and commenced using it with all their energy. Close as they were upon the land, they would have cleared it, had they not, in their hurry and excitement, committed the blunder of working against each other; that is, while Pat and Hezekiah did their utmost to veer the boat toward the Ohio shore, Waring struggled to clear the island by going on the Kentucky side. The consequence of these efforts was, that ere they had taken a dozen strokes, the flatboat grated upon the gravelly bottom, and went broadside upon the island.

As the current was quite rapid at this portion of the river the raft was driven with such force upon the beach that Waring saw at once that it would be impossible to get it off again, unless it was lightened of its entire load. Springing down upon the island, he took a hasty survey of his situation, so far as the darkness would permit.

and as Hezekiah and Pat joined him, mentioning the plan that we have stated, he said:

"There is no other help for it, and we must make quick work of it. The moon at the very furthest will be up in twenty minutes, and it won't do for any of the savages to discover us, but, to get off, it will be necessary for your father to come ashore. Is he awake?"

"Yes," said Virginia, who arose upon hearing the bottom of the boat grating upon the gravel, "and will be here in a moment."

Virginia was assisted to descend by her lover, and a moment later her father followed her. The other three men instantly set to work, and in ten minutes the boat was sufficiently lightened to make the attempt to get it afloat again. By the united efforts of the three it was shoved out into deep water, where, to their dismay, they saw it commence settling down, as though it were sinking.

"Begorra! but what does that mane?" cried Pat, in astonishment.

"Hark! if I ain't mistaken, I hear the water rushing in its bottom."

With one bound, Waring sprung upon the gunwale, and descended into the cabin. One glance was sufficient. An immense hole had been stove by the concussion, and a foot of water was already in the cabin. The flatboat was now going down, and there was no hope of saving it.

With rare presence of mind, Waring leaped back into the water, and attempted to shove the boat far enough away to make it sink out of sight when it did go down, it being his wish that the Indians should discover nothing of their mishap when the moon arose, or in the morning. But in this he did not succeed. He had hardly touched his shoulder to it, when he felt that it had already touched bottom, the water being scarcely eighteen inches deep—so low, in fact, that no one, viewing it from the shore, would suspect its true condition.

"This is a little more than I suspected," said Waring, gloomily, as he stepped ashore. "That rotten old flatboat will never do us one bit of good, with such a hole smashed in it."

"Can it not be repaired in the morning?" asked Mr. Lander, who seemed affected as little by adverse as by favorable circumstances.

"Repaired? no, we should never have ventured out on the river, in such an old bulk as that. But it can't be helped now; we must make the best of a bad bargain. When the moon rises, we'll get an idea of our situation."

"It *may* be," said Hezekiah, hoping to encourage Virginia, "that this island is near enough for us to wade to the mainland."

"Suppose it is, what good will it do us?" asked Waring.

"Why, as the settlement can't be more than a dozen miles distant, if you have no objection, we might walk the rest of the way through the woods."

"If we could only get the boat afloat again, or make it sink out of sight; but there's the trouble. However, there's no use crying for spilt milk. Can you propose nothing for us to do, Pat?"

"I propowes to wait till we get some more light, and then we'll take a luk at things."

"And in the mean time let us make ourselves as comfortable as the circumstances will permit," added Mr. Lander, philosophically.

It being a warm summer night, the whites suffered little or no personal inconvenience from their exposed situation. It was found that this portion of the island, at least, was covered with trees and rank undergrowth, which protected them from the night wind, slight as it was. To make matters in that respect sure, however, Mr. Lander proposed that a fire should be started, but when he found what a storm of objection he had raised, he said no more upon that subject.

There being nothing else for them to do, then, the whites withdrew within the trees, and seating themselves upon the ground, waited the advent of the moon, which from some unaccountable cause to them, was so long delayed.

CHAPTER VI.

RECONNOITERING THE ISLAND—A STARTLING OCCURRENCE.

As the moon rose above the forest, and shone down upon the river, the whites began to gather some idea of their situation. They found that the island upon which they had been stranded was about in the center of the stream, and that, as a consequence, it would require considerable wading to reach the mainland on either side.

The wooded bank of the Kentucky shore being thrown into deep shadow by overhanging branches, it was impossible for them to discern whether any canoes were lying under it or not. The hearts of all beat painfully as they looked upon the flatboat, now of no further earthly use to them, standing out like a beacon to inform all where the whites had taken refuge. It seemed to them impossible that the Shawanoes could fail to see it.

The island was found to be more considerable in extent than had been first supposed. It was over an eighth of a mile from one extremity to another, thickly wooded, and covered with rank grass and a dense undergrowth. It was oval-shaped, and remarkably regular in its contour, being somewhat over two hundred feet broad in its widest portion.

"What a splendid summer sate this would make fur a gintleman like meself," said Pat, as the two stood under the shadow of a tree, on the lowermost portion of the island.

"It really would," replied Hezekiah. "Now I shouldn't wonder if it should be used for that very purpose in a few years."

The speaker was right in his prophecy. These very lines are being written upon that very island—one of the most beautiful of all the isles of the beautiful river.

"Be the same token, it's the summer sate of a party of travelers at this minute, and it's likely that we'll make quite a stay upon it."

"I hope there ain't any Indians watching us," said Hezekiah, as he shiveringly looked toward the shore of the dark and bloody ground.

"So does Pat Mulroony, but—"

"Jerusalem! jest look there!" whispered Hezekiah, springing clean off his feet.

"Whisht! where? I sees nothing."

"Here! here! this way!" whispered Hezekiah, pulling his shoulder around. "It ain't there—"

it's on the island, right above us! Look—don't you see it?"

"I see the traas, and the darkness, and that's all."

"It was gone the minute you looked. There it is again! There, it's gone! What makes it act that way?"

"What is it, man, you're making such a hullabaloo about?"

"Why, sir," said Smith solemnly, "as sure as you and I are living, I seen a light moving around on the island!"

"It's Pat Mulroony that—"

Smith suddenly caught the Irishman's shoulder as with a grip of iron, and without whispering a word pointed meaningly toward the trees where he had first seen the alarming manifestation. There was no mistaking this time. Pat Mulroony saw a bright light shining steadily through the trees, so brightly and steadily that he knew it could not be many rods from them. Withdrawing more closely under the dark shadow of their own tree, Pat whispered:

"We must craap up and see what the haythens are doing."

"I say, Pat, I say—that is—you've no objection to go alone have you?"

"Why can't yees go with me?"

"I can, of course I can, but then what's the use? I'll stay here, and keep watch."

"And what's the naad of your kaaping watch at this poortion?"

"You know some of the Indians might slip onto the island while we are gone, or," added Hezekiah, catching at the thought, "these same Indians might try to slip off. Jerusalem! that wouldn't do, you know."

"Doesn't yees wish to go with me?" persisted Pat.

"I would *prefer* remaining here, my dear Patrick."

"Well, then, kaap quiet and sthille like, and I'll soon be back wid yees. Don't stir ef you hear a noise."

"I say, Patrick—"

But the Irishman was gone.

"I hope he doesn't think I'm afraid," soliloquized Hezekiah when he found he was alone.

"I think I have proved by this time that I am not. If I was scairt any I would never have come out into this outlandish country. I don't know about that though," he added, after a moment's thought; "I did hate to come into this wilderness most terribly, but I had to do it, and I might as well own up, when there's no one to hear me, that I was most thunderingly scairt, and am this minute. What do I want to go crawling around this cussed island for? I wish I had never seen it. I've a great notion to wade over to the Kentucky shore, and go home."

We must do Smith the credit, however, of stating that he did not even attempt to act upon this thought. When a moment's reflection showed him how contemptible and cowardly such a course would be, he felt like butting his head against a tree, that he should have allowed himself to entertain such an idea for a moment.

"I hope the Irishman knows enough to keep his eyes about him," he continued. "That young Waring was right in saying the crisis of

the danger would be reached to-night. We're in the crisis now, and a derned ticklish affair it is, too."

Hezekiah was standing in the attitude of acute attention, every faculty absorbed in one of listening, when his whole being was thrilled by the explosion of two rifles, followed by a series of horrid yells that made his blood curdle. It needed no thought to tell him that these came from the throats of the Shawanoes, and that the most that he feared had taken place.

His first impression was that Pat Mulroony had been discovered, and fired upon, and that his own safety was in imminent danger; but, when he came to reflect more quietly, he knew by the distance of the sounds, that they came from the upper portion of the island, and that it was the friends who had been left behind that were attacked. Believing, then, that Pat was safe for the present, he decided to remain in his present position until he he was rejoined by him.

Hezekiah had hardly come to this conclusion when a light coming from the upper end of the beach caught his ear, and turning his head he saw that a canoe had just landed within twenty feet of him, and, at that very moment, two painted Indians were in the act of stepping ashore. With his heart in his throat, he shivered around to the opposite side of the tree, and tremblingly watched the actions of these savages.

They were very deliberate in their movements, seeming to take no notice of the tumult which, a moment before, had broken the profound stillness of stream and wood.

First pulling the canoe high up on the land, each took a rifle from it and then strode directly toward the tree which concealed the frightened man. As they passed so near, that he could have touched them with his own rifle, he absolutely believed they would hear his heart beat. But such a thing has never taken place, no matter how wildly that organ has throbbed, and then the Indians, who would have detected the faintest sound, passed on, and disappeared in the wood of the island, without once suspecting how nigh they had been to one of the very beings for whom they were searching.

They had hardly gone, when Pat Mulroony stole cautiously forth into view, and looking carefully about him to satisfy himself that he had not lost his reckoning, ran on tiptoe to where Hezekiah stood.

"What did you see?" breathlessly inquired the latter.

"May our howly mother presarve us, but the island is full of the haythen!"

"What was that light we seen?"

"It was the camp-fire of a whole pack of the devils! But we're in a bad fix."

"Didn't you hear them rifles? They're in a worse fix," said Hezekiah, in an undertone.

"What's to be done?"

"That's what puzzles me. We must get back if we can, and see what the outlandish devils have been at."

The two started toward the upper end of the island, the Irishman not disdaining to use the utmost caution. Every dozen yards or so, he paused and listened for the slightest warning of danger; and, as for Hezekiah, he expected each

moment to see a whole horde of screeching Shawanoes rush out from the trees and annihilate them.

Some two-thirds of the distance was thus accomplished without any further evidence of the presence of their foes, when the Irishman, who was only a few feet in advance, again halted with a whispered exclamation.

Following the direction of his finger, Hezekiah saw several dark objects moving away from the island, which he made out to be canoes.

Fearful of being seen, the two whites withdrew further from the shore.

They had gone but a few feet, when they found themselves in a sort of natural clearing, some twenty yards in diameter, seemingly made by some terrific whirlwind. And here, in the center of this clearing they saw a sight that made their blood run cold with horror!

The moon by this time was high in the heavens, and the center of the clearing was lit up as if at noonday; and directly under the full tide of light, was stretched the lifeless form of Mr. Lander. He lay on his back, all his limbs outstretched, with his skull cloven by a tomahawk! He seemed to have made no resistance when the awful blow was given, but had fallen back, and instantly expired. His features were so disfigured that, had it not been for his clothes, our friends could not have recognized him. Spellbound, and horror-struck, they gazed at the heart-sickening sight for a long time!

CHAPTER VII.

ADVENTURE ON THE ISLAND.

FOR some time after the departure of Hezekiah and Pat Mulroony, Waring and Virginia Lander stood silent and thoughtful. Several feet away, they could see the form of her father, seated upon the ground, his head bowed forward, and his whole soul seemingly stricken with despair.

"He appears to feel our sorrow more than we do," whispered Waring, whose heart bled for the suffering man.

"It is not that," replied Virginia; "it is his bodily sufferings that trouble him. Poor father! how I wish to brush the hair from his clammy brow. I will go to him in a minute—he is praying now."

A soft, murmuring monotone was audible, and young Waring knew that he was engaged with his Maker. The scene was too impressive, their surroundings too solemn, for them to indulge in conversation, and they preserved a respectful silence; the maiden leaning upon her betrothed, and waiting until her parent was through before she should go to him.

After the lapse of several more minutes, she saw him raise his head, and walking hastily toward him, threw her arms around his neck, and gave way to her tears of sorrow. Her whole soul was in agony, and her grief could not be restrained. Waring, who was accustomed to the suffering of the father, witnessed the emotion of the loving daughter, and was so overcome that he suddenly turned his head and moved away. It was too much for him.

Hardly conscious of what he was doing, he walked slowly out from the protection of the trees and stood on the moonlit beach. He placed the stock of his rifle on the hard shingle, and leaning upon it, gave way to the most gloomy meditations.

Directly before him, as motionless as a rock, rested the bulk of the sunken flatboat. The soft ripple of the Ohio against the sand at his feet, that deep, hollow murmur of the great wilderness were the only sounds that reached him, and these, from their monotonous continuity, seemed silence itself. The moon was nearly overhead, shining in that peculiar manner, that the river seemed to reflect more light than it received. A few straggling clouds, as white as snow-drifts, now and then floated before the moon, and huge, grotesque shadows glided over the island, across the stream, and into the wood, like phantoms. On either side, the frowning forest rose like a wall of blackness and seemed to close the whites in an impregnable prison.

It was no wonder that the young adventurer felt gloomy and despairing. It could not be otherwise than thus, while within a dozen miles of the settlement, and in the most dangerous portion of the river, an accident should place him and his friends in the most imminent peril, and make the escape of all of them, as it seemed to him, an utter impossibility.

Waring was in the midst of these gloomy forebodings, when the noise of a light footstep startled him, and looking around, he turned to greet his friends:

"Well, what have you discovered?" he added.

"Are we alone on the island?"

To his surprise he received no reply.

"What are the prospects of our getting over the mainland—"

As quick as lightning Waring's rifle was at his shoulder, and one of the approaching Shawanoes was shot through the breast. With a wild yell, he sprung high in the air, and fell dead upon the sand. At the same moment the white man saw something cleave the air, and heard a rushing sound close to his face, followed by the splash of the tomahawk in the water behind him. Clubbing his rifle, he stood on the defensive, when he noted that neither of the savages had possessed a rifle, and conscious that he was more than a match for the surviving one, he made a rush at him.

The Indian turned to flee, and Waring had hardly started in pursuit, when the report of a second rifle was heard among the trees, followed by a series of whoops and yells, as if a legion of demons had suddenly been loosed. With that presence of mind which ever characterized the young man, he comprehended his critical peril in an instant. The trees were swarming with Shawanoes. If he went a rod further his destruction would be inevitable.

Wheeling around with such celerity that his momentum carried him nearly off his feet, he flung his gun from him, and ran for his life to the flatboat. Stepping one foot into the water, he made a tremendous bound, and alighted upon the gunwale, the same as a bird would have done; and then tear-

ing his hat from his head, he concentrated all his energies in the one effort, and sprung full fifteen feet out into the river.

The instant he came to the surface, he gasped for breath and dove again, swimming while beneath the surface, as far out toward the Kentucky shore as it was possible, repeating the maneuver several times, until believing he was at a safe distance from the island, he swam sideways, and anxiously surveyed the island.

So prompt and rapid had been his movements, that he had not been seen, and his own escape, if he chose to improve the opportunity given him, was at least insured; but Luther Waring would have rather been smitten by instant annihilation, than desert the two beings that he had left behind him. The thought had never once entered his head.

He continued off the island until the current had nearly carried him half-way to the water's edge, so that he believed he had run little risk of discovery. As he walked in under the shadows, several forms followed him like phantoms, while as many more closed around him from the wood. Waring had taken but a few steps, when he was startled by hearing a deep groan. His apprehension told him at once that it was the voice of Lander, and he was moving toward the point from which it came, when he caught a glimpse of the shadow-like figures around him, and saw that the most dangerous crisis of his life was upon him.

The Shawanoes had not yet surrounded him, and conscious that all depended upon a quick and energetic decision, Waring made a dash to regain the river. The dense undergrowth at this portion of the island impeded the movements of both pursuer and pursued; but the activity of the white man was superior, and he was the foremost at the beach, when, making another terrific leap, he bounded out into deep water, and dove beneath the surface.

While submerged, Waring heard distinctly the dull report of the rifles, and the skipping of the bullets, as they glanced over the water. Being a skillful swimmer, he turned upon his back, and as he was borne slowly upward, he allowed only his mouth and nose to be exposed, when, inhaling a sufficient quantity of air, he again dove, and repeated precisely the same maneuver that we have described before.

Finally, believing he was again safe, he allowed his head and shoulders to come to view, and looked back toward the island. To his dismay, an Indian canoe was within a dozen feet of him. Its occupants descried him at the same moment that he discovered them, and now commenced a most exciting race of life and death.

One minute would have decided the contest in the middle of the river, but fortunately, indeed, Waring's efforts had brought him within a few rods of the shore. Fearful of being fired upon, he repeated his stratagem of diving, and when he came to the surface, struggled frantically to gain the shore, with the canoe darting forward like a shadow. As soon as he could gain a foothold, he tore through the foaming water, and dashed into the woods, while the canoe was scarcely twice its length behind him.

It was only by the most skillful running.

dodging, and doubling, that Waring succeeded in freeing himself from his agile pursuers. He had gone fully half a mile in the forest before this was accomplished, but he found himself, at length, entirely alone, and panting and exhausted, he seated himself upon the ground, to decide upon the next course to pursue.

He could not think of leaving the island, when he had every reason to believe that all he held dear on earth was upon it. Virginia was a captive in the hands of the merciless Shawanoes, and even if he could afford her no assistance, he could certainly learn something of her fate, and form some plan for her rescue.

With this determination he arose, and retraced his steps. It is hardly necessary to say that he made his way as silently, stealthily and cautiously as it was his ability to do; starting at every rustling wind, or falling leaf. Upon reaching the shore of the river, he found that he was above the island, and again wading it, swam out toward it.

Waring wished if possible, to recover his rifle, and gain a glimpse of the band of Indians who had slain Lander, and who held his daughter captive. Steadying himself, he allowed the current to carry him downward, and when several rods distant, checked his motion, and took a survey of the flatboat and the surroundings.

He saw his rifle lying on the beach, its ornamented stock and barrel shining in the moonlight. After carefully surveying every portion of the island, that came under his observation, he detected no sign of dangers and was about to let himself float forward again, when the lifted head of the Shawanoe rose above the gunwale, and remained in view for fully a minute.

As the moon shone fully upon the savage, Waring distinguished the features plainly. He concluded at once that there were several others upon the flatboat, and all waiting for his return. The savage gazed carefully around him, and descriing nothing, his head disappeared from view.

"Ah, my fine fellow," thought Waring, as he noiselessly swam toward the Ohio shore, "you may watch there quite a while, before you catch me in any of your traps. You have had blood enough for to-night."

He now floated slowly down the river, keeping about midway between the island and the Ohio bank, and so far as possible, examined the former, as he passed the bank. Reaching its extremity, he passed around it, and commenced ascending the opposite side, so as to complete his reconnaissance.

This was an extremely difficult task, and none but the most powerful swimmer could have accomplished it. But Waring succeeded, and finally "anchored" for a few moments abreast the flatboat, while he took another observation of it. He saw nothing more of the Indians, although he firmly believed they were still upon it.

He was convinced that the major portion of the Shawanoes were still upon the island, and after floating somewhat lower, he landed at precisely the same spot where he came so nigh being captured before. Feeling confident that he had not been seen, he unhesitatingly came ashore, and passed beneath the shadow of the trees.

Upon coming from the water, his limbs were so heavy, and he felt so exhausted, that he threw himself down upon the ground, to gain a few moments' rest. Despite the exciting scenes in which he had just participated, and the terrible ordeal through which he had just passed, he fell asleep almost immediately.

It was in the midst of a fearful dream of tomahawks, scalping-knives, Indians and murders, that he was awakened by a grasp upon his arm. Believing resistance to be useless, he lay motionless, waiting for the command of his captors.

"If you've no objection, I should like to inquire whether you are not about through with your nap?" inquired the well-known voice of Hezekiah Smith.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL ON THE ISLAND.

THE dull, gray light that now began to overspread the sky, gave token of the coming day, and the three whites withdrew further into the grove for consultation.

"This is a bad business," remarked Waring, after he had exchanged experiences with his friends. "The infernal devils have outwitted us at last. God knows what will become of Virginia. Her poor father is already dead!"

"Yes, we have seen him," said Hezekiah, with a shudder at the remembrance of the awful scene. "He isn't a dozen rods away from us."

"Let us give him a decent burial," added Waring. "We can find some means to scoop out a grave for him."

The three moved away to the clearing, but, upon reaching it, nothing of the body was to be seen. The Shawanoes had carried it from the island.

"Perhaps it is as well," said Waring. "He is beyond all pain and suffering, and the disposal of his body can make no difference to him, although I would that we could have performed the last sad rites for him."

"Wall," said Hezekiah, clamping his rifle down upon the ground, as he came to a halt, and folding his arm over it, "here we is, and the question afore this assembly is how we're going to get away. What do you propose to do, my dear Patrick?"

"I advise that we ate breakfast."

"The only objection to that," replied Waring, "is that we have none to eat; but, badinage aside, we must first go over this island again, and learn whether there are any of the demons left. If not, we must get on their track, for, as true as the heaven is above me, I never go to that settlement without Virginia."

"I am certain—that is, as certain as I can be—that the last of the Indians left the island a half hour ago. We seen their canoes going off."

At the extremity of the island the three separated, as had been proposed, and commenced making their way back again.

In doing this, it was necessary to avoid exposing themselves to any who might be on either shore of the mainland, and, from the great caution that was necessary, the work was an extremely difficult and tedious one.

It was not until full two hours had elapsed that the three whites met on the spot where Virginia Lander had been taken prisoner.

Their search, or examination, as it might be termed, proved that the savages had, indeed, left the island, not a sign of one having been discovered. They had probably done this under the belief that the whites had succeeded in reaching the mainland, so that the latter were convinced that, if they kept themselves concealed through the day they would not be disturbed, and could easily get away when night came again. The ashes of their camp fire had been discovered, and blood upon the leaves, and other evidences of their recent visit.

"But, if you have no objection to tell, where's your rifle?" asked Hezekiah, who had noticed that Waring was unprovided with that weapon.

The latter looked through the trees.

"Yonder it lies this very minute. Strange, that they did not steal that also. I will go and recover it."

He paused, ere he had passed out from among the trees, for the very fact that the rifle lay there undisturbed, sent a suspicious pang through him. It seemed improbable that such an occurrence could be mere accident. A true Indian rarely, if ever, committed such an oversight. The rifle was magnificently mounted, and would have been a prize to any one.

There was another matter which, in Waring's state of mind, excited suspicion and apprehension. He believed the gun did not lie on the precise spot where he had thrown it. He recollected that he had flung it with such force that it must have gone very nearly to the edge of the beach, whereas it now lay either on the very spot that he had passed over, or a few feet upon the opposite side.

This circumstance, which, at any other time, would have attracted no attention at all, caused Waring great uneasiness. He felt that it was by no means certain that everything was right upon the island, even though it had been proven that their enemies had just left it. It looked to him as though a trap had been laid to ensnare him, and this rifle of his, lying but a few yards distant, was the bait.

Feeling pretty well convinced that there was some design in the presence of this rifle, he set himself to work to discover the precise means by which it was intended to entrap him. There being no Indians on the island, of course he ran no risk of being taken prisoner, in case he ventured out to recover the weapon. The distance from this point to either shore was so slight that it would have been the easiest matter in the world for a concealed savage to pick him off. The gun could not be recovered without exposing himself to this peril.

Ah! the flatboat! Waring's heart leapt at the thought. Strange that it had not occurred to him before. There it lay, just as it had during the night, save, perhaps, that it had sunk a few inches lower. It was upon that he had seen the heads of several Indians, and there, in all probability they still lay in wait, watching for his reappearance.

What reason had these Shawanoes to suppose that Waring could again return to the island?

The best of reasons. He had shown to them a desire to do so, and as long as he believed that Virginia Lander was there, the savages well knew he would linger in the vicinity. Once upon the island, he would not fail to recover his gun, provided he believed he incurred no additional danger in doing so.

That, then, he concluded, was the solution of the question. Taking other matters into consideration, Waring came to the conclusion that it was their desire to take him prisoner instead of shooting him, deeming, most probably the latter death far too comfortable a mode for him to use in getting out of the world. He knew enough of the bloodthirsty savages to understand what a terrible fate would be his, in case he fell into their hands. They would take a fearful vengeance for the Shawanoe he had killed in self-defense. Well, indeed, had it been for the feeble Mr. Lander that he was so enfeebled and weakened. It brought him a speedy death, instead of a lingering torture.

These reflections, which we have recorded at some length, occupied Waring but a few seconds. He saw everything with a hunter's eye, and, with a shake of his head, stepped back a pace or two, and resumed his position beside the Irishman and Hezekiah.

"What's the matter?" asked the latter.

"It won't do—it won't do."

"What won't do? Do you mean to go out there and pick your rifle?"

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"What is to hinder?"

"I don't like the looks of that flatboat."

"Whew!" blew Hezekiah, surveying the object in question as though he had never seen it. "If you've no objection, might I inquire why you don't like it?"

"I am afraid there are Indians concealed upon it. I saw them there last night."

And now arose a dispute in which all three of the whites engaged. Waring, who most certainly was the best qualified to judge, expressed it as his firm conviction that a half-dozen Shawanoes, at least, were at that moment glaring out from the flatboat, and waiting for their reappearance. Hezekiah dissented, and persistently maintained that there was but one savage upon the craft, and that he lay in the cabin sound asleep! He could give no satisfactory reason to the others for this belief, but he appeared sincerely to believe it himself. Pat Mulroony, on the contrary, was ready to swear that there wasn't a red-skin on the island, flatboat, either bank, or within five miles of them!

"Be jabbers! I'll soon find out."

"How?"

"I am going on the owld flatboat itself."

Pat's companions begged, entreated, and implored, but all to no purpose. He had resolved to prove what he had argued, and he now prepared to do it.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEARFUL ADVENTURE.

It is not to be supposed that Pat Mulroony was entirely free from fear, when he resolved upon the venture of which we have spoken.

The strenuous assertions of Waring, the equally positive belief of Hezekiah, and their united protestations convinced him that they were at least sincere and honest in their efforts to preserve him from harm. Nevertheless, like a genuine Irishman, he sturdily combated them, determined to demonstrate his sincerity by actual experiment.

It is a fact that a man may commence with the assertion of an absolute falsehood, and conscious, at the beginning, that he is defending such, argues himself in time into the belief that it is genuine truth.

Pat Mulroony had walked two-thirds of the distance to the hulk, and was within a few feet of the water, when he paused. He had discovered a fearful and startling thing!

That which arrested the brave-hearted Irishman, was the sight of a human eye. At a small auger-like orifice at the mouth of the boat he suddenly distinguished the glowing eye-ball of a Shawanoe Indian! It was glaring like a demon's, and a cannon-ball would not have stopped him sooner.

Waring and Hezekiah, noticing his hesitation, called out in a whisper for him to return. This very call was the means of sending him forward again. He was resolved that they should never laugh at this adventure, and with rather a quickened step, he strode forward, and catching the gunwale by one hand, he carried himself with one bound over upon the deck.

He had left his rifle behind, and was armed only with his knife. His two friends breathlessly watched him and listened. They saw his head and broad shoulders gradually lower as he walked undauntedly toward the stern of the boat, until the bow hid him from sight, and then all was still.

The silence lasted for perhaps a full minute, and then was broken by a yell as startling and terrific as an explosion of thunder in the clear summer sky. Instantly a half dozen tufted heads were seen dodging hither and thither over the deck, all centering around one burly, bare-headed figure that was struggling like a lion amid a score of enemies which had dogged him nigh to death.

While Waring and Hezekiah gazed transfixed with horror, a powerful-limbed Indian shot up like a rocket in mid-air, and came down in the river. Ere he had struck, another went spinning after him, falling flat on his face in the water, with a concussion that cracked like a pistol. While they were swimming with all speed back to the boat, a heavy fall was heard, a faint shuffling noise, and then all was still.

As the foremost Indian was in the act of pulling himself over the gunwale of the flatboat he let go with a horrid whoop, and fell back dead, killed by the bullet from Waring's rifle. The other attempted to swim behind the stern, but Hezekiah shot him through the brain ere it could be accomplished.

There could be but one cause for the sudden cessation of the tumult upon the flatboat. Pat had either been overcome or slain. The silence that succeeded the fearful yell and the struggle was equally painful and impressive to his two

friends. They waited long and impatiently for it to be broken.

"It's all up with him!" whispered Waring, as he primed his rifle. "I pity him, but our hands are clear of his blood."

"Too bad, too bad," muttered Hezekiah, who had just loaded his rifle, "he was a good fellow, my dear Patrick was indeed. I am sorry that he has come to this bad end!"

"We must look out for ourselves now. The best thing we can do is to get off this infernal island, which has been the scene of such misfortune to us. I am afraid that if we remain much longer, you will take it into your head to perform some such feat, and I shall be left alone."

"No, indeed, I won't, there's no danger of that," added Hezekiah, so eagerly and earnestly that it brought a smile to the face of Waring.

"It is yet early in the forenoon, and I suppose we shall be compelled to remain here until night."

"Of course we shall! It won't do to start out in the river in open daylight. We'd be killed before we had gone a dozen inches."

"Hello! did you hear that?" exclaimed Waring.

Several whoops were heard upon the Kentucky shore, apparently in answer to those which had been uttered some minutes before by the captors of Pat Mulroony. Peering through the trees, Waring added:

"There is a party of the thieves coming off from the mainland in a canoe. Get ready for hot work."

"Drat the things—can't we hide?" anxiously asked Hezekiah, looking around him for any place that might offer.

"No, we must stand our ground; they have just started."

The canoe which was approaching was a large Indian one, in which were seated three or four Shawanoes, all busily plying their paddles. They headed straight for the upper end of the island, while the whites stood each behind a tree with cocked rifles, waiting until they were compelled to fire.

Just as the canoe seemed about to touch, it sheered off and ran alongside of the flatboat, where it lay against and parallel to it. The heads of four savages immediately appeared above, as though they were staggering under the weight of some heavy load. The next second Pat Mulroony, bound hand and foot, was handed over and deposited in the bottom of the canoe. His friends could hear him muttering dire threats of vengeance, and daring his captors to loose him for a moment, all of which it is needless to say attracted no notice whatever.

The captive disposed of, the Shawanoes followed, sinking the canoe to its very gunwales. They paddled away toward the shore, and in a few moments disappeared from view.

"Now at least," said Waring, "the island and boat are free of the imps, and we can have a breathing-spell. Let us go upon the old hulk."

"What in the world do you want to do that for?"

"It is the safest place."

"If you've no objection, I should like to inquire how it can be the safest place?"

"In the first place there is no one upon it, and in the second place, as its sides are bullet-proof, we can use it as a fort, and keep off any number of foes until dark, when we can get off ourselves."

"Let's go upon it, then, before they come back."

It was with some misgiving, slight enough, but still sufficient to occasion uneasiness, that Waring once more approached the flatboat. When he reached the deck he experienced an irresistible desire to explore every portion of it, not that he suspected the presence of any Indian but that he could not feel positively assured until he had done so. The result was that it was found to be entirely empty of any persons except themselves. The cabin was half-full of water, and it was here that the Shawanoes must have concealed themselves while their victim was approaching.

CHAPTER X.

COMPANIONS IN CAPTIVITY.

WITH his usual recklessness Pat Mulroony, after arriving upon the hulk of the flatboat, descended into the cabin. He had just reached the base when he espied several Indians, and he immediately retreated to the deck again.

Knowing that he was "in for it" he turned, and catching the foremost Indian in his arms, threw him bodily into the water. The second he served in the same manner, when he found the red-skins were coming up rather too fast for convenience.

However, he gave the third a tremendous blow in the face, and commenced laying about him in regular Donnybrook style, when his foot slipped, and ere he could rise he was seized and bound.

"Trate me gintlemanly," said he, "for yees can't deny but what I sarved yees in the same manner."

The Indians could but respect the bravery he had shown, and they offered him no violence. He was then passed over the side into the canoe, and transported to the shore. Shortly after, his captors joined the main body, where he met Virginia Lander, in the same helpless situation as himself.

The Shawanoes were gathered in an irregular circle around the fire, some smoking, others chatting, and others apparently asleep.

The savages had thrown a brilliant crimson shawl over her shoulders, and her hair being as jetty black as theirs, and her head bowed, he had taken her for one of their number when he first looked upon them. Virginia sat with her head bowed, for her heart was stricken with grief. The picture of her cherished father springing up with his wild look, and running through the trees, pursued by his merciless enemies, was ever before her. She could not drive it from her, and shudder after shudder ran through her frame, and the tears trickled thick and fast between her fingers.

How changed since yesterday! Suffering,

misfortune, and death had come upon them—had swept her only relative upon earth from her, and separated her from him who was dearer than any relative could be! All alone—alone!

No, she was not all alone! There was One who was ever nigh her—who never lost sight of His stricken ones, and who only could comfort her in this dark hour which had come upon her. To Him she turned, as the human heart will turn, when bleeding and lacerated, and refusing to be comforted by any sympathy the world can give.

But it was hard to be separated from all kindred. The thought was loathsome and full of abhorrence that she, an unprotected woman, was alone among a party of bloodthirsty savages. She hardly dare look upon them, and yet looking through her tears she ventured to steal a glance at them. How her heart leaped, as her gaze rested upon the broad, jovial face of Pat Mulroony, his pitying blue eyes fixed upon herself. Removing her hands, she looked up, and with a mournful smile returned his nod of recognition. Comprehending the question her very looks formed, the quick-witted Irishman replied:

"Yes, I'm the only one besides yerself that the haythen have, and they wouldn't have got me if I hadn't struck at 'em too hard, and missed 'em. Ye jist keep quiet, my jewel, and ye'll hear of Pat Mulroony ag'in."

A sort of consultation was now held among the Shawanoes, relating not to the prisoners, but to those who were not, the debate being as to what means should be employed to capture them also. After a protracted discussion it was decided that the whole party, with the exception of enough to guard the prisoners, should cross over to the island and boldly attack them.

This decided upon, the preparations were instantly completed, and the warriors moved down to the bank, leaving Virginia and Pat to the guardianship of two of their number. At the very moment of reaching the river they descried the two whites as they climbed upon the flatboat.

This caused a halt and a further debate. Large as was the Indian party, a majority were opposed to assaulting the whites in their strong hold. They had already learned enough of their mettle to understand that this would be a most dangerous undertaking upon their part, and many more were convinced that there was no hope at all of success, even with the loss of two-thirds of their number.

It was actually decided to give up the hope of securing the two remaining whites by this means. The sagacious Indians suspecting the relation which existed between one of them and one of the captives already in their possession, believed a much better opportunity would be offered. Love will play the wild with any man, and lead him to attempt deeds which in his cooler moments he would pronounce madness. So they were content to bide their time.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE IS HEZEKIAH?

As the Shawanoes had invariably come from and returned to the Kentucky side of the river, Waring concluded that the entire war-party was upon that shore, and it was therefore determined in leaving the island that they should cross over to the same bank.

"It will bother us somewhat to manage our rifles," said he, "and as we may need them the instant we touch land, we must keep them and our ammunition out of the water."

"Rip off a piece of this old hulk and float them over on that."

"A good idea."

The suggestion of Hezekiah was adopted at once. A portion of the cabin was loosened and placed in the water, and upon it was laid their two rifles and powder-horns. The raft thus formed was so buoyant as to afford them material assistance in swimming.

The night was of inky darkness; the most favorable that the two adventurers could have wished. Yet, fearing that the savages might suspect some such stratagem as this, they allowed themselves to drift downward with the raft until they had passed the lowermost portion of the island, when they shoved out into deep water, and commenced working their way cautiously over toward the Dark and Bloody Ground.

"Be careful and keep your limbs under water," admonished Waring; "a single splash may betray us."

"Yes, I understand," whispered Hezekiah, kicking around like a frantic frog. "It appears to me that we're going down-stream faster than across it."

Such was the case, as Waring found that his efforts alone tended to carry them across, Hezekiah's being as much in one direction as another, amounted to nothing.

"Drat it," muttered the latter, "it's something like that canoe I got into the other night. Never mind, we'll come out somewhere."

A few minutes later the two touched bottom, and pushing their craft carefully before them, came out in the woods, where the blackness was of Egyptian intensity. Hezekiah bumped his head several times before he dared rise to a perfectly upright position, and then he could only discern the shadowy form of his companion beside him.

"Whatever happens, or whatever you see," whispered Waring, "don't speak or start."

"I know better than to do that—drat that limb! it has nearly sawed my neck off."

Knowing that the current must have carried them a considerable distance down the river, Waring used the bank as his guide, and ascended a considerable distance before he began to look about him for the savages. After having progressed somewhat over a quarter of a mile, he caught the glimmer of a light through the trees, and touched Hezekiah upon the arm, as a caution for him to be on his guard.

Making their way carefully through the tangled undergrowth, through hollows and over fallen trees, across brooks and miry patches of

earth, they at length stood within a hundred yards of the Shawanoe camp-fire.

Waring's heart sunk within him, for he understood at once that the Shawanoe war-party had divided, and that neither of the captives was before him. When had the separation taken place? What direction had the other taken? How could its trail be gained?

These were questions which instantly presented themselves to the young adventurer's mind, and which for a long time he was unable to answer. Amid the profound darkness which held reign, it was very obvious that nothing could be done. Even the full, bright moon was unable to penetrate with its light the solemn labyrinths of the Dark and Bloody Ground. Nothing could be done until morning.

As neither Waring nor Hezekiah had enjoyed any sleep for many hours they both felt fatigued despite the exciting situation in which they were placed. Withdrawing a considerable distance further into the forest, they both lay down beside an uprooted tree, and were almost immediately locked in slumber.

The sleep of Waring was deep and dreamless. It was not until the sun had been up several hours that he opened his eyes. As soon as he recovered from his temporary bewilderment he arose, chagrined that he had lost so much valuable time. To his surprise, upon looking around nothing was seen of Hezekiah Smith. Thinking, however, he could not be far away, Waring seated himself upon the tree and waited for his return.

An hour passed away, and still no sign of his missing companion. The young man had whistled, and gave utterance to all the signals at his command, but had elicited no response. He was now alarmed, and greatly vexed; alarmed at the singular disappearance of his friend, and vexed that now, when every minute was of the utmost value to him, he was thus compelled to remain, and accomplish nothing. At length his patience became insupportable.

"There is no use of remaining behind," he muttered. "The Shawanoes have gone, and every minute places them further from me. I will follow them alone, relying upon my own arm and the kindness of Heaven for success."

Throwing his rifle over his shoulder, he moved resolutely off, resolved never to turn his back upon his enemies until he had learned something of the fair captive they held. It was a desperate proceeding, indeed, for a single man thus to pit himself against a whole party of redskins, but our hero felt no hesitation in doing it.

It was now, too, that Waring began to experience the pangs of hunger. He had fasted a long time, and was so famished that he determined to secure some food at all hazards. At the period of which we write, game was very abundant in this portion of the West, and the decision had scarcely entered his mind when several wild turkeys, their wings outspread and their feet scarcely touching the earth, sped along within a stone's throw of him. As quick as thought the foremost was shot and in his hands.

The instant that Waring had secured his game, he regretted having discharged his piece,

for he felt certain he had exposed himself to danger. Some of the Indians must certainly be within hearing, and would be attracted thither by a suspicion of the true state of the case.

To guard against capture Waring made all haste through the woods in the direction of the camp-fire which had been deserted by the savages, in the belief that this would be the last place where his enemies would seek for him. Upon reaching it he was gratified to find a large quantity of live coals, and, without hesitation, he plucked and dressed the turkey, and proceeded to cook it.

The bird afforded him a most needed and nourishing meal, besides furnishing enough for future use; and now that his immediate wants were attended to, Waring set to work in earnest upon the all important object that had brought him thither.

In the first place, it was necessary to discover the trails of the two war-parties, and in trying this he failed completely. Although gifted with more than ordinary intelligence, shrewdness, and cunning, he had not yet learned enough of the woods to follow the faint footsteps of the wild Indians through its labyrinths when the traces left were so faint that the human eye, unless trained by an experience of years, could not detect the least signs of the passage of any one.

Had the Shawanoes proceeded with their usual caution, it would have been absolutely impossible for Waring to have followed them a hundred yards through the wilderness. But, fully conscious that no enemy that need cause them the least uneasiness was in their vicinity, they straggled forward as carelessly as a party of schoolboys. This only was the reason why our hero was enabled to follow them.

Waring, under the belief that they had penetrated further into Kentucky, for a long time examined the ground only upon that side of the fire. His efforts meeting with no success, he resorted to the opposite side, where the trail was discovered at once.

It being impossible to find any further signs of the passage of the Shawanoes in any other direction, he concluded that both parties must have gone this way, which, somewhat to his surprise, led toward the river. Keeping along on the trail, he found, as he had feared, that they had embarked in their canoes, and gone either up, down, or across the stream.

"And how am I to tell which way?" he muttered. "I must run the risk of getting the wrong choice out of these three." Waring, under ordinary circumstances, would have been discouraged at the formidable obstacles which now arose before him; but one of his temperament could never rest while the object of his choice was a captive in the hands of the savages, and he, therefore, did not once think of turning back.

"They cannot have gone up the river," he reflected, "because they have come from that direction. And yet what reason is that why they should not have done so? Yet it strikes me that they have not taken that course. They could have gone much more rapidly overland. If their destination is in Kentucky, it surely is not on the banks of the Ohio; it must be a good

distance back from the river, so that they would only have lengthened their journey by taking to the water. From all that I have ever heard or read of the Shawanoe Indians—to whom this war-party surely belongs—I have been led to suppose that although they range at will on both sides of the river, still their towns and villages, and their home, in fact, is in southern Ohio. And what more natural, now that they have secured their prisoner, than that they should return to their homes as rapidly as possible? Such, it seems reasonable to believe, is the true state of the case, and I must cross the river again."

Waring was on the point of venturing into the river, when his attention was arrested by a loud splash in the direction of the flatboat, and to his surprise he descried several Indians upon it. Finding that he was not observed, he drew back and watched their actions.

A glance convinced him that they belonged to the same war-party of Shawanoes, and were searching the craft for plunder. They had thrown over a sort of bench, which was fastened, bottom upward, to the stern of a canoe. They were some half-dozen savages, who, a moment later, shoved off and paddled down the stream.

Their light craft shot rapidly forward, inclining neither to one shore nor to the other. From this, Waring's belief that the main body had crossed the river was changed into the conviction that they had all gone down the stream in their canoes; and that all that remained for him to do, was to keep these red skins in sight.

This was a difficult task, indeed. Under the skillful guidance of the sinewy Indian, their canoe skimmed like a swallow over the water, and it required the most strenuous efforts of Waring to keep it in sight. Fortunately, indeed, the wood, a few yards from the shore, was open, and his footsteps were not much impeded.

Hurrying thus forward, now and then darting to the river-bank, he kept up the pursuit for five or six miles, the canoe all the time paining upon him, until finally he lost sight of it behind a bend in the river.

Waring was panting and perspiring, and in no pleasant mood, that, after all his efforts, he was compelled to fall behind, and he relaxed into a sullen walk.

"It seems as though everything is conspiring against me," he muttered. "I have done everything in my power, and here I am at last, left entirely alone, without knowing whither a single one of my friends has gone. It matters little what becomes of me. A curse upon the infernal Indians that have persecuted me thus!"

He walked moodily forward for an hour or so, by which time he had passed the bend in the river, around which the canoe had disappeared. The river at this point took a due southwest direction, running so nearly straight that a view of several miles was afforded. Nothing of the canoe, however could be seen. It had gone, Waring knew not where.

Wearied and dispirited, he threw himself upon the ground, and endeavored to sleep. But he was too excited and nervous to rest; and devouring what he could of the remaining por-

tion of the turkey, he threw the rest from him, and leaned his head on his hand to reflect upon the best course for him to pursue.

He had lost all traces of the Indians and their captives. How he should ever meet Virginia again it was impossible for him to imagine. In the impenetrable depths of the great wilderness which surrounded him, where the merciless red-men wandered for miles, how could he, a single, unaided white man, follow them? How—

The explosion of a rifle broke the stillness of the woods, and springing to his feet, Waring hurried madly forward, scarcely conscious of what he was doing. After running a short distance he paused, and parting the bushes, gazed upon a scene that thrilled his very being with the wildest of thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPLOIT OF HEZEKIAH SMITH'S.

HEZEKIAH SMITH awoke two full hours before Waring. Looking toward him, and noticing that he was still slumbering, he concluded not to disturb him, as he well knew how exhausted his frame must be. Feeling perfectly wakeful himself, he arose to his feet and looked around him.

The first sensation experienced by the New Englander was that of hunger—a craving for food immediately. The sun had just risen, and although he was well aware of the abundance of game in the wood, he dared not fire his gun on account of the proximity of his enemies.

"I guess I'll take a tramp down the river," he concluded; "and when I get out of their hearing I'll knock something over, and eat enough to last me a week."

He looked down upon the tranquil face of Waring.

"He appears to sleep very sound, and I guess it's hardly worth while to disturb him. He'll be there when I come back, and all the better for the extra rest he has received."

With this philosophical conclusion, Hezekiah wandered off in the woods. It was his intention to take a southerly direction, penetrating further into Kentucky, and such was his course at first. But, unconsciously to himself, he deviated to the right, parallel with the Ohio.

With no sensation but that of hunger—with the resolve to attend to that immediately and at all hazards, Hezekiah hurried forward without once noticing the course he was pursuing, or reflecting that it was more than probable he would be entirely lost in the trackless wilderness.

While still hurrying forward, his excited ear detected the faint gobble in the woods, as if a lost turkey were calling its companions; and proceeding stealthily onward, he suddenly came upon a gobbler, that was wandering about disconsolately, as if indeed lost. Before it could get out of his reach, Hezekiah discharged his piece, but only wounded it.

It started off on a rapid run, and, fearful that it would escape him if he paused to load his rifle, he dashed after it at the top of his speed, and now commenced a most interesting race.

All things considered, perhaps, in the condition of the gobbler, Hezekiah could outrun it, that is, if both were given the same chance; but the bird had a way of slipping through the undergrowth, jumping under the bushes, and trotting over fallen trees, as though they were not there, that gave him an immense advantage over his pursuer.

The latter tore headlong through the bushes, sometimes a rod or two in the rear, sometimes almost upon it, his hope constantly kept up to a most exciting point, by the hairbreadth escapes it made from him. More than once he made a frenzied leap forward, and, as he fell on his face, caught perhaps the tail feather of the bird, while the bird itself glided through his grasp, leaving a most vivid impression of its tapering form upon his hands, which had slipped over it so neatly. Then, again, he would strike at it with his rifle, and perhaps pin another feather to the ground.

"Drat it!" exclaimed Hezekiah, after one of those fruitless attempts. "It's enough to make me swear. I'll chase him as long as I can stand, but what I shall get him."

It is a fact, to which all hunters will testify, that, in the exciting pursuit of their game, they can travel mile after mile with hardly any sensible fatigue. It is not until they come to retrace their steps that they realize how great a distance they have passed over. The attendant, perhaps, whose mind does not participate in the same excitement, is exhausted even in following the hunter.

Thus it happened that Hezekiah Smith, who would not have believed he had gone more than half a mile, chased the gobbler for fully ten times that distance, at the end of which it did not seem fatigued in the least, the wild turkey, as our readers are aware, being a noted runner. With no thought of giving it up, Hezekiah still pursued it at the top of his speed, occasionally making a leap forward at it, and the bird as often eluding him as cleverly as ever.

Suddenly he caught the glimmer of something through the trees, and to his joy, saw that they were approaching the banks of a river. He was now sure of the bird; he had fairly earned it; and his tormenting hunger was about to be satisfied.

Gracefully and majestically as the bird reached the edge of the river it spread out its wings, and, sailing through the air, landed upon the Ohio side, and disappeared in the woods.

"That is unpleasant. If my rifle had only been loaded I would have finished him."

In chasing the gobbler, with all his turnings and doublings, Hezekiah had become, "turned around" himself, so that it seemed to him the Ohio river was running in the wrong direction, and that he was on the other side of it. Concluding, however, that such a phenomenon would be a miracle, he kept on down the river, having decided that it would be useless to retrace his steps, in the hope of finding Waring.

He was walking slowly forward, panting and fatigued, when it struck him that there was a peculiar smell in the air. It seemed as though something were burning, and, knowing that he was in the midst of an Indian country, he

guarded his steps, and kept a more watchful eye upon his surroundings.

It turned out as he had expected. He was close upon an Indian encampment. He caught a glimpse of the gaudy, fantastic costumes of the savages through the trees, and approaching as nigh as he could, he concealed himself, as well as his position would admit.

It was with singular emotions that Hezekiah recognized this party as the identical Shawanoes who had attacked his party, and who held Pat Mulroony and Virginia Lander as captives. The fact that they must have been here some time proved that they had broken their last night's encampment at an early hour, and departed even before he himself had awakened.

The party seemed to have lost several of their number—some four or five—but there was no mistaking the others. Hezekiah recognized them at once. What surprised him still more, was that none of the captives were visible. What had become of them? Had they been sent in advance, in charge of a smaller party? What possible cause could the Shawanoes possess for taking such a step?

These questions ran rapidly through the mind of the New Englander, but there was another which constantly presented itself, and that was the one in regard to obtaining food, for satisfying his hunger, which was constantly growing greater. There seemed but one course left for him, and that was to take to the woods again. He was on the point of doing so when his heart leaped at what appeared a most fortunate occurrence to him.

Several times he thought he had detected the smell of burning meat, and the cause of it was now explained. Some twenty rods to the right of the encampment of the savages was a smaller fire, at which a single squaw was cooking. At the moment that Hezekiah caught sight of it, this squaw had left it, and the meat was entirely unguarded.

The temptation was too great; Hezekiah was only sensible of his intolerable hunger. Running back into the woods a few rods, he came in the rear of the fire, and totally unmindful of his imminent danger, snatched the meat, and seating himself upon the ground, commenced devouring it like a wolf.

The first mouthful was dropped suddenly upon the lawn, being so hot that his tongue was blistered. But he soon became used to it, and in a few moments had swallowed the entire piece of meat, and was wiping his fingers upon his hair.

"Just as much as I could possibly get down me," he muttered. "I couldn't possibly swallow another mouthful, and—"

A shrill whoop suddenly broke the stillness of the woods, and turning his alarmed gaze behind him, he saw the squaw, standing within a dozen feet of him. She was fairly blue with fury, and was screaming as if to split her lungs.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Hezekiah, who now saw how foolhardy he had been, "the old woman is riled considerably, and if I ain't mistaken them Indians are likewise."

The outcries of the infuriated squaw had attracted the instant attention of the Shawanoes.

who had caught a sight of the white man as he was rising to his feet, and three of their fleetest runners started in pursuit.

Hezekiah Smith's frame was gaunt and attenuated, and he was sinewy and muscular. He was not only very fleet, but possessed bottom, and was capable of holding his own against any one, and he now darted into the woods at a rate that excited the admiration of his pursuers. The three separated, so as to make sure of the fugitive, and called all their energies into play to overtake him.

The forest for a considerable distance was open, and afforded a good field for the runners. The distance between Hezekiah and the Shawanoes remained about the same for five or ten minutes, when one of the latter discharged his rifle, and the white sprung high in the air with a loud yell.

But he hadn't been struck. It was only fright. The report of the gun gave an impetus to his flight, and soon carried him far ahead of the red-skins. Dodging hither and thither, flitting in and out among the trees, it was impossible for the latter to gain anything like an accurate aim, and they did not repeat the attempt to bring him down.

All was now going well for the fugitive, and he would have escaped had he understood the woods. But his ignorance was fatal. Directly ahead of him was a deep gorge, or ravine, toward which the Shawanoes had managed to turn his face without much difficulty, and unconsciously to himself he was running directly into a trap.

It was not until he was on the very brink that Hezekiah realized his peril. His hair fairly rose on his head, then, as he glanced about him. To the right and left, stretched the deep yawning gorge, too broad to be leaped over, and offering no means of access except a sheer precipice, down which it would have been certain death for him to have gone. Escape was cut off! There was no help for him! He was fairly at bay!

"It's no use of talking," he exclaimed, wheeling round, and placing his back toward the gorge. "I'm cornered this time, and there's going to be a row!"

So saying, he clubbed his rifle, and awaited the onset of the Shawanoes!

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRUGGLE OF LIFE AND DEATH.

THE Shawanoes, as we have before stated, had separated during the pursuit, and were now some distance apart. The center one being directly in the rear, was the closest to the fugitive, and came up to him considerably in advance of the others. This was fortunate, in one sense, for Hezekiah Smith, as he then had but a single opponent with which to contend.

The lithe, agile Indian was all eagerness to secure the white as his captive and forgetful of the axiom, "a stag at bay is a dangerous foe," he halted not in the least, but came at full speed toward him. When within a rod or so, he whirled his tomahawk in a circle over his head, and hurled it with tremendous force full at the breast of his dauntless adversary. The latter, from the motion of his arm, comprehended what was coming, and dodging his head with light-

ning quickness, the weapon flashed over him, and went spinning end over end down the steep ravine.

Both of the combatants had dropped their rifles and drawn their knives. With a demoniac yell of triumph the painted Indian leaped high in air, and swinging his knife, sprung upon his foe. In a twinkling both were disarmed in a singular manner.

It so happened that the two struck at each other at precisely the same moment; the knives encountered with such force that the Shawanoes shot out of his hand and followed the tomahawk down the ravine, while Hezekiah's was turned so suddenly that it fell to the ground several yards distant. Both were now entirely unarmed, and glaring at each other for a second, like baffled tigers, they closed in the struggle of life and death.

In point of strength the two were very nearly equally matched. In activity the red skin had decidedly the advantage, but the white man being an expert wrestler, and the savage a perfect novice, the former was in a fair way to end the contest in his own favor. The instant he grappled with his dusky adversary, he felt that he was in his power.

By a trick, or rather art, well known to wrestlers, Hezekiah twisted the savage off his feet, and threw him with stunning violence upon the ground, falling heavily upon him. Allowing him to rise, he repeated the performance several times, the red-skin becoming more and more exhausted each moment, until it was manifest to himself that he had not the shadow of a chance in such warfare as this.

The cunning Shawanoes had noticed where the knife of his adversary fell, and each time that he went down he managed to work himself nearer to it. Hezekiah did not comprehend what he was at, until the savage clutched it with the quickness of thought, and rising again to his feet, confronted him with the weapon.

Not the least daunted, for he was now terribly excited—he closed again with the Indian, receiving an ugly cut in his arm as he did so. At this moment he heard the yells of the other two Shawanoes, and driven to fury by his imminent peril, he concentrated all his strength in the one mighty effort, and grasping his adversary around the waist, he lifted him clear off his feet, and flung him like an infant over the precipice.

Down, like a meteor, through the dizzy air, shot the Shawanoes, with his arms clutching wildly at space, spinning from crag to crag, with his awful cry coming up like the wail of some spirit!

The struggle occupied scarcely a fifth of the time taken in describing it. Impelled by the most implacable hate on each side, the blows were quick and fierce, and the termination speedy and tragic. A shock when the two encountered, a few blows and strivings, another struggle, more determined than the others, and it was ended.

Hezekiah had secured his knife before throwing the savage into the ravine, and with this single weapon he confronted his two foes. They were both about the same distance from him, and he was in doubt whether to expect their

united onset at the same moment, or whether they were going to attack him singly. The latter proved to be the case. One of the Indians seemed to be a sort of chief, or, at least, higher in authority than the other; for waving his hand for him to keep his distance, he advanced upon the white man, with the determination of disposing of him, without assistance from any one else.

This savage was a much more formidable foe than the other, and Hezekiah being considerably exhausted from his recent efforts, he was in a poor condition to receive him. Nevertheless, there was no help for him, and he showed an undaunted front. The Shawanoe halted a moment, as if to decide upon the best method of attack, and then, with a yell as demoniac as the other, sprang forward.

He had passed over half the space intervening between him and his adversary, when he uttered another yell—a short, frenzied, agonized one, and throwing his arms aloft, fell dead!

Hezekiah had caught the report of a rifle, and saw a red spot suddenly appear on the forehead of the Shawanoe, so that he understood at once that he had been shot. But who had come up and fired his piece so opportunely? What friend had he in the Dark and Bloody Ground? Why did his friend remain concealed?

The remaining red-skin had halted upon seeing his companion fall by the mysterious shot, but he evinced no disposition to flee. On the contrary, he continued to approach, fully resolved that the foe should not escape him.

"By thunder! you're the only one left, and I reckon as how I can dispose of you," exclaimed Hezekiah, preparing to receive him. "Though if their should happen to be another rifle around, it would be mighty welcome just now."

The Shawanoe had learned caution from what he had witnessed, and although as brave as a mortal could possibly be, he deemed it best to use prudence in the case. His mode of attack was peculiar. He commenced slowly circling around his adversary, his black, snake-like eye fixed upon him, while the latter kept turning, as if on a pivot, so as to confront him.

In going in this circular manner, the Indian came to the very brink of the precipice, so that his form stood out in relief upon it. More than once when he was in this position, Hezekiah was upon the point of springing forward and shoving him over. His heart throbbed painfully, as he balanced himself for the leap, lest the risk was too great for him to attempt it. He more than half-suspected the Indian was maneuvering for that purpose, and would succeed in throwing him over instead.

All at once, with the inevitable whoop, the red-skin bounded forward, and struck at Hezekiah with his drawn knife. Singular as it may seem, the two weapons encountered in precisely the same manner as did those of the first two combatants, and both were as suddenly deprived of all arms, except such as nature gave them.

As the two closed in with each other, it seemed to Hezekiah that this Indian was much more powerful and difficult to manage than the other, or possibly his own strength was failing.

Remembering, however, that he was the only foe which it was necessary to overcome, and that a prolonged contest might bring some of his companions to the scene, he summoned all his strength to this last conflict.

He succeeded in throwing the Shawanoe, and falling heavily upon him, but it required such an expenditure of strength that he doubted whether this means of exhausting him would not first "use up" himself. Furthermore, he found it impossible to hold his foe. Whether his body was greased or not, he could not tell, but the red-skin kept up such a twisting and squirming that he glided from his grasp as easily as an eel could have escaped him.

Concluding that it was vain to hope for any success by means of wrestling, Hezekiah now bent his efforts toward drawing him to the edge of the cliff with the determination of throwing him over. The savage comprehended his intention, and probably believing he could do the same thing with the white man, favored his efforts, and in a few seconds both were upon the very brink of the precipice.

And now commenced the awful struggle. With sinews strained to their utmost tension, with limbs braced and and pressed against each other, their chests heaving, with teeth set, and their eyes gleaming with the most implacable hate, the combatants strove together!

In reaching the edge of the ravine, the Shawanoe was on the inside—that is, he was the nearest to it—and Hezekiah succeeded in keeping him there. Gradually working him higher and higher to the dread chasm, until he felt his strength going, the New Englander gathered his knee to his breast, and summoning all his power, with one mighty effort he kicked the savage from him and over the cliff!

But horror of horrors! in going over, the Shawanoe caught him with both hands by the ankle, and Hezekiah felt himself following! He clutched the twigs and stones within his grasp, but they all yielded and came with him, and he could not shake off the dreadful incubus that was drawing him on to death. He screamed and shouted, and blistered his hands in his efforts to stay himself, but it was all useless.

Further, further, further—the Shawanoe's weight seems to increase each second—the white man's outspread hands slide over the earth and rock!—he is going, going, going!—his head slips over! and now down like a meteor, through the dizzying air, with wild, ecstatic thrills shooting through his brain—a second's delirium—an awful, stunning shock—and all was dark! The lifeless forms of Hezekiah Smith and the Shawanoe Indian lay side by side at the bottom of the gorge!

The reader will recollect that Luther Waring, in wandering through the woods suddenly came upon an unexpected scene, and rushed forward in a state of great excitement. The sight that met his gaze was Hezekiah Smith and the second Indian struggling together. Without a moment's reflection he discharged his piece, killing the savage as before related. He was about to rush forward to the rescue of his friend, when he caught sight of the third Indian; and believing that a party had just arrived, and

that he could afford him no assistance, and that he was in imminent danger of his own capture, he turned and fled.

Running some distance, he was considerably surprised to find that he was not pursued, and suspecting, that, after all, he might have been mistaken, he cautiously retraced his steps. He arrived at the spot of the tragic scene we have just described, and looking over the brink, descried the two inanimate forms lying below.

With a painfully throbbing heart he hurried through the forest, and by a circuitous route entered the gorge. In a short time he came upon the two Indians and his friend. All three were bruised and bleeding, and as Waring looked above him at the height of the precipice, he took a melancholy consolation in the thought that the death of Hezekiah Smith had been speedy and almost painless.

"Would that I could give him a decent burial," he murmured; "but I cannot. He shall not remain here, however, to rot beside those fiendish savages. I will do what I can for him."

Taking him in his arms, he carried him some distance to where there was a mass of debris and stones at the side of the ravine. Here depositing him carefully upon the ground, he first covered him over with brush, and then stones, until his body was entirely hidden from sight. The principal object in doing this was to secure his remains against outrage from the savages.

"Farewell," said Waring, as he turned away. "I have known you but a short time, and have learned but little of you, but I have learned enough to know that you were a FRIEND; and now, a last adieu to you, my FRIEND!"

With a saddened, mournful heart, he turned away and walked slowly through the ravine.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

WARING's meditations, as he walked through the gorge, were gloomy and melancholy enough. Now, indeed, he felt he was alone. Two of his companions had been slain, and the other two captured; and what could he, single and unaided, accomplish against these inhuman denizens of the wilderness? Absolutely nothing.

And yet he could not persuade himself to give up the hope of a final rescue of Virginia Lander. That hope gone, life looked dark and gloomy to him. Rather than never see her again, he felt that he could willingly share captivity and death with her.

The plan which Waring at length decided upon, was to make his way to the settlement, and seek the aid of the settlers. He could be no great distance from it; and, as the Shawanoes seemed to linger in the forest, there could be little difficulty in finding and following their trail.

With his head bent, and with feelings saddened and thoughtful, from the frightful scenes he had just witnessed, Waring walked slowly forward until he had emerged from the gorge, and was again threading the shadowy woods. At length he entered a portion where the undergrowth became more tangled and dense, and where from necessity he was compelled to recall his mind from its reverie, and occupy it with his immediate duties.

He had penetrated, perhaps, a third of a mile into this undergrowth, when, becoming exhausted,

he threw himself upon the ground for a few minutes' rest. He had scarcely seated himself when he was fairly startled out of his senses by hearing the hum of voices! Listening carefully, he soon distinguished the words:

"Begorra, it's meself that's thinking this 's the most delightful retrate of my life, barring that it was a retrate from necessity. What do you think of it, my leddy?"

"Oh! I am so thankful to be free from those loathsome Indians that have persecuted us so long!"

"If we only had that long-legged Hezekiah Smith, and the handsome young felly that ye calls Waring, how much more pleasant the retrate would seem! Eh, wouldn't it now?"

"I do indeed pray that they may rejoin us. Since my poor father has fallen, I am lonely enough with him also gone. Who knows but that he, too, is in their hands?"

"It's meself that understands yer feelings. I mind the time that I lost Molly McMooney at the Tipperary fair, me heart was broken intirely till I found her ag'in."

Could Waring believe his ears? Those surely were the voices of Pat Mulroony and Virginia Lander, and, from their words they were alone. Could it be they had escaped? Had the Shawanoes voluntarily freed them? What could it all mean?

He arose and looked around him. Yes; but a few rods away he saw the two seated by a small fire, as comfortable as if on some pleasure excursion. The genial face of the Irishman was wreathed in smiles, as he blinked through the smoke at the girl upon the opposite side. The face of the latter was pale, and she wore a saddened, thoughtful expression, for it was hard for her to smile at the witticisms of her good-natured companion, when her terrible bereavement was so recent.

Hardly able to restrain his emotions, Waring approached the two. As he did so, the back of Virginia was turned toward him, while the Irishman faced him. The latter immediately caught sight of him, and signaling him to stop, said to Virginia:

"Did you ever hear, my leddy, that Pat Mulroony was a magician?"

She looked up as if she did not comprehend his question.

"A magician? What do you mean?" returned Virginia.

"A man who on account of his superior vartues is gifted with more than mortal powers. One who can do anything."

Thinking the words of the Irishman to be nothing more than some jest, intended to divert her attention from her grief, Virginia made no reply.

"Whisht, now! ye doesn't belave me, I see. S'pose I should call up that young Waring that belongs to yees out of the ground, would you then belave it?"

"I am in no mood for such trifling," said she, with a reproving look. "I would prefer you not to disturb me."

"Whisht, now, jist look."

Pat Mulroony's incantations to convince his fair companion of his supernatural powers were as singular as they were characteristic. Pitching forward, he came down upon his hands so as to invert himself, where balancing himself for a moment, he kicked his feet in the air several times with such vigor that one of his shoes flew off. This accomplished, he came down again, replaced his shoe, and danced what he termed the "Tipperary Reel," after which he suddenly became rigid, and exclaimed:

"Look behind yees! Mr. Waring, appair!"

Virginia would not have obeyed him had she not detected the laugh of her lover as the Irishman spoke. Starting up and turning around, she was the next instant clasped in his arms.

"Thank God! thank God!" exclaimed the young adventurer fervently. "Found at last. Oh, how rejoiced I am!"

Virginia could not speak; her joy was too great for words.

During this affecting scene the Irishman pretended to be busily occupied with the fire. He did not replenish it, but kept displacing the embers as if to make them burn better. The air being quite warm and genial, it seemed strange that he should have kindled it; but the cause was his excessive politeness and consideration for the fair charge in his hands. Noticing that Waring's actions seemed somewhat restrained, he said encouragingly:

"Don't be scared, don't be scared, I isn't watching ye. It's point of honor with Pat Mulroony never to disturb a couple when engaged in courting. Please proceed."

"We have no disposition to do anything of the kind at present," replied Waring. "I am surprised, Pat, that you should have escaped from the Indians with Virginia here, when a short time since you were both prisoners in their hands. Pray, how came it to happen?"

"It didn't happen at all jist. Pat Mulroony is the boy that is up to them same tricks. He is the one that understands the blackguard haythen—he is."

"I do not doubt that; but let me hear the account of this exploit of yours."

"Begorra! where is the long-legged chap, Hezekiah, that ye had with ye?"

Waring, in a few words, related what is already known to the reader; and then repeated his request to the Irishman for an account of his escape from the Shawanoes.

"Wal, ye saas, the way that it happened was this: I s'pose you know how I was took on that oild flat-boat?"

"Yes; your own foolishness was the cause of it. You need not relate that. Give us what happened subsequently."

"Wal, ye saas, the haythen had us pretty fast, and it was mighty onsartin the way things looked. Whisht! what is that?"

The near report of a rifle suddenly broke the stillness of the woods, and the two speakers instantly sat down where they were better protected by the undergrowth from observation. All interest was immediately centered upon the one thought of safety.

"I am afraid that we are still in imminent peril," whispered Waring. "Those Shawanoes, without doubt, are upon your trail."

"No, be the powers, they ain't!"

"Don't be too sure, my friend. Those lynx-eyed savages will follow the lightest footsteps."

"Not if they're made in the water—eh, boy?"

Waring began to comprehend matters. Still he replied:

"You are some distance from the river, remember, and neither you nor Virginia could get to this spot without leaving a trail which these Indians could follow without the least difficulty."

"S'pawse they didn't know where to look for the same."

"That may all be," replied Waring, somewhat petulantly; "and yet what I say is true. They are constantly ranging through the wood, and it is by no means improbable that the traces of your passage are discovered. But let us cease talking for the present."

The two listened for several moments, when hearing nothing further, the Irishman cautiously arose and commenced peering around him. Ere he had half-turned his head, he suddenly dropped to the ground again with a suppressed exclamation.

"He's right out there!" he whispered.

"Where? Who is there? What do you mean?"

"A bloody big Shawanoe, in his war-paint, leaning against a tree out there."

Imitating the motion of Pat Mulroony, Waring descried the savage in question, standing as he had remarked. His back was turned toward the whites, so that it was impossible to discern his features. He

was rather tall in stature, and appeared to have his arms folded, as if he were exhausted.

"Wait till I show ye a specimen of Pat Mulroony's shooting," said the Irishman reaching out for the gun of Waring. But the latter refused it.

"It looks too much like murder."

"It's mighty little like murder their dallings with us luks, be the same token."

"His death can do us no good," added Waring.

"The report of our rifle would attract the attention of the savages in the vicinity, and we could not again escape their clutches."

"Ye talks now like a reasonable person," said the Irishman, somewhat mollified at the explanation. "Hist a moment till I takes another look at the gentleman."

Pat Mulroony's head commenced slowly rising, while as his knees gradually straightened, his arms were elbowed, and his hands kept flapping like the flippers of a turtle—the instinctive admonition to the lookers on to maintain a profound silence.

As his head rose to its full height, Waring saw, from the sudden light that filled his eyes, that he had discovered something further. Without removing his gaze, he motioned for his companion to look. The latter did so, and descried the Shawanoe walking away in the woods. In a few moments he had disappeared, and the three were left alone.

Waring turned to Virginia, and assured her that the danger had passed, and that she need feel no further alarm. They would not move from their present position until nightfall, when the chance of escape would amount almost to a certainty. After this, the young adventurer again demanded of the Irishman an account of his flight from the Shawanoes, and he, nothing loth, proceeded to give it.

We choose to relate it in our own words.

CHAPTER XV.

AN EXPLOIT OF PAT MULROONY'S.

DURING the captivity of Pat Mulroony and Virginia Lander, the Shawanoes kept them sedulously apart. Although Pat ventured to address her several times, he was compelled to do it in tones loud enough for all to hear him, though whether they understood him or not was altogether a different matter.

The Indians remained at their camp, where Waring had seen them through the night. As he had supposed, the party had divided, one division taking both the captives with them. The cause of this was, the Shawanoes were upon the war-path, and the whole company, numbering over twenty warriors, had set out to attack a small village belonging to a hostile tribe. Having inflicted about all the injury that it was possible for them to inflict against the whites, they were now anxious to proceed with their expedition. As their prisoners could be nothing more than an incumbrance to them, eight of their number were detailed to conduct them to one of the Shawanoe towns in southern Ohio.

The separation of the Shawanoes was made early in the evening, and before it was fairly light, the two parties were proceeding in the direction of their respective destinations. The main party proceeded down the river on the Kentucky side, while the eight Indians embarked in separate canoes with their captives.

Six Indians were in one of the boats, and two in the other, excluding the captives. It was intended that the two parties should keep company to prevent any chance of escape by the burly Irishman, although in his present helpless condition, bound and secured as he was, a boy could have taken care of him without assistance.

The gray morning mist was just lifting from the Ohio, as the two canoes shot out from the Kentucky shore, and sped swiftly down the river. The point at which they intended to land upon the other side, was several miles further down, bringing them con-

considerably nearer their town than a direct passage across the stream would have done. The Irishman, who understood a few words of the Shawanoe tongue, had gathered this much from the conversation of the savages before starting.

The two Indians who used the paddles were seated in the stern of the canoe, scarcely a foot apart, while Virginia was near the center, and Pat Mulroony in the bow, his back being turned down-stream, and his face toward his captors. In this position, the captives were constantly under the gaze of the lynx-eyed Shawanoes, and could not converse, even in whispers, without being seen. Nevertheless, the Irishman had no hesitation in attempting it.

"Miss Virginny, how is it ye faals jist now?"

"Sadly enough," she replied. "Our only hope is in Providence."

"If I only had my hands loose," whispered Pat, "I would smash them two copper-skins there in the stern, and run in to shore, in spite of the haythen in the other vissel."

"Perhaps they would loosen your hands if you requested them to do so."

"Begorra! but they won't though."

"You might try it, Pat; make believe your bonds hurt you, and I have no doubt they will loosen them."

After a moment's thought, Pat determined to try the artifice which his fair companion had recommended. Accordingly he began groaning and twisting his face into all manner of contortions, in order to enlist their sympathy for his suffering. It was little sympathy the savages felt for him, but his moans and struggles were so persistent and annoying that the foremost Indian, with one blow of his knife, freed his arms, refusing, however, all his entreaties to do the same thing for his feet.

"Ugh! keep still—kill with knife—don't," said he, threateningly.

Pat Mulroony had succeeded far better than he had dared to hope. He felt considerably elated thereby, and, rising up in his seat, commenced "joking" with his grim captors.

"Ye handles them paddles as if yees was used to 'em. Be the same token maybe ye is. How is it?"

But the stoical Shawanoes deigned not to notice him, and Pat continued:

"Begorra, but yer mothers must be proud of sich boys as yees, that is if ye has ary mothers. Do you mind that haythen there in the starn, Virginny? Wall, now, ef I had to make a guess about him, I should say he was a cross between an Irish chimney swaap and a monkey from the South Seas. It must be swate for a gal to be hugged by yees."

The canoes were now rather close to the Kentucky shore, and constantly approaching nigher, although Pat Mulroony, who had his eyes about him, was at a loss to conjecture the cause of this movement. The other canoe was considerably in advance—its inmates finding it difficult to time their velocity to the tardy movements of their two companions.

Of course the remarks of the Irishman were not comprehended by either of the Shawanoes, although they now and then caught a word. But it was easy to see from his pleasant eye, his broad grin, and the rollicking expression of his face, that he was in the best of spirits. Despite the stern, gloomy exterior of the foremost savage, there was a spice of waggery in his composition, and his black, snake-like eyes softened somewhat in expression as he looked upon the jovial Irishman.

"Paddle 'um canoe!" suddenly remarked this Indian, handing his paddle to him.

"Of course will," replied Pat, eagerly taking the proffered paddle.

He dipped it deep into the water, and attempted to make a powerful sweep with it; but it turned in his hand, cutting through the water like a knife,

and with such velocity as nearly to throw him overboard. Both savages laughed at his awkward movements, while the Irishman worked all the harder.

"Get in the bow of the boat," he whispered to Virginia, as he kept hard at work. The girl arose and exchanged places with him, the savages looking upon her movement as a voluntary one upon her part, to be safe from the erratic blows of the toiling captive. By and by these became so amusing, that the remaining Shawanoe ceased working in order to watch him.

There were three noticeable facts which entirely escaped the observation of the savages. The first was that the other canoe was a considerable distance in advance of them—much further than they would have been willing to allow, had their attention been called to it. The second was that a few hundred yards down-stream, a large creek put in from the Kentucky shore; and the last, and certainly most important one, was that in spite of the awkward, aimless efforts of the Irishman, the canoe was approaching slowly but surely the mouth of this creek. The latter fact might possibly have been merely accidental, but a suspicious observer would not have believed this. Virginia, too, noticed an expression in the eyes of Pat Mulroony, that made her heart beat faster.

Nearer and nearer approached the canoe to the eddying mouth of the creek. The Indians, grinning and unsuspecting, did not notice it until they were fairly within it. Then one of them reached forward to take the oar.

"Ugh! turn back!"

The Shawanoe suddenly dropped back, having received a stunning blow upon the head from the heaviest end of the oar. So violent was it, that, striking the edge of the canoe, he rolled over as helplessly as a log.

"Begorra, but I axes yer pardon!" exclaimed Pat, to the struggling savage. "But I handles the paddle so awkwardly, that— Holy virgin! if I haven't hit the other haythen a crack, too, and he's gone overboard! What's got into me paws?"

The second savage had sprung up, as his companion went into the water, but, as quick as lightning, he dropped back in his seat, catching the sides of the canoe so firmly, that he did not go out of it. The Irishman's blows being "sidewinders,"—that is, on the side of the head, their natural result was to send the recipients overboard, and the Shawanoe in question saved himself so narrowly, that Pat was mistaken in supposing that he was following his comrade.

"That was another awkward piece of business. Let me tip ye another iligant whack with me shillalah, in the true style of Pat Mulroony, from Tipperary."

Ere the second blow caught the savage, he gave vent to a screeching yell, loud enough to wake the dead. But it did not save him from whisking over the canoe like a frog, and going down out of sight.

The first Indian had by this time arisen, and was endeavoring to climb into the canoe. His hideous face painted and agleam with the most deadly ferocity, had appeared over the gunwale, and the frail vessel was in momentary danger of coming apart or sinking.

"Go round to the starn, if ye wants to come in!" exclaimed Pat, striking him a tremendous blow in the face with his fist, that quickly loosened his hold. Dipping the paddle into the water, the Irishman now plied it with a skill fully equal to that of the Shawanoes themselves, sending it with a wonderful velocity directly up the creek.

But the second canoe had seen that something was wrong before the yell of their unfortunate comrade had reached their ears, and they were now fairly flying over the water, toward the captives. The Irishman, with a coolness, and presence of mind that was remarkable under the circumstances,

seated himself in the stern, and keeping a sharp eye upon either bank, sent his canoe swiftly up the creek, approaching closely to neither shore.

He had calculated to a second almost, the instant when the pursuing Indians would arrive at the mouth of the creek, and consequently, how long he might ascend it without danger of discovery. Virginia, who kept her gaze fixed toward the river, announced that the two Indians had swam to the mainland, and were evidently awaiting the approach of their companions.

It was the intention of the Irishman, when he ascended as far as he durst, to sheer the canoe under the right bank, which, fortunately for him, was protected by dense, overhanging undergrowth, and concealing his vessel as well as circumstances would permit, to hurry into the woods; but at the moment he dipped his paddle for the purpose of doing so, he made a discovery which induced him to change his mind.

But a comparatively short distance from the Ohio, the creek divided into four narrow branches, scarcely more than three or four yards in width. Believing that the Indians would have no means of learning the course he had followed, he shot the canoe into the lower one of these, and the next minute had disappeared from view.

The fugitive ascended this branch of the creek for a furlong, when it became so narrow and rapid, that the expenditure of labor was too great to pay them for going further by this means of locomotion. Touching the shore, Virginia sprung out, the Irishman followed, pulling the canoe after him, and rearranging the bushes behind, so as to disarm their pursuers of any suspicion, should they follow as high up the branch as this point.

Determined that the canoe, if discovered, should afford them no good, Pat Mulroony turned it over, and springing upon the bottom, inflicted an irreparable injury, by staving it in.

"Come on, me leddy," said he to Virginia, "and when ye mates Mister Waring, ye can tell him that Pat Mulroony bails from Tipperary, and can teach him how to use the shillalah."

An hour or so later, they reached a spot in the forest, which, pleasing the fancy of the Irishman, he ordered a halt, for the purpose of resting themselves. Declaring that Virginia must be cold, in spite of her protestations to the contrary, he persisted in kindling a fire, which had been burning but a short time, when Waring made his appearance, as we have already related.

"And now, about how far off is that settlement?" asked Pat Mulroony, at the conclusion of his narration.

"It cannot certainly be over eight or ten miles, at the most, as we have been proceeding toward it all the while. We surely ought to be able to reach it in a few hours."

"And what is there to hinder us from starting this minute? The ould man is dead—hoping the leddy will excuse me—and that long-legged Hezekiah has given up the ghost, and we're all that's left of the party which was on the flatboat a few days since. Bein' we're all here, I makes the move that we starts at once, and have this blatherin' matter done wid'."

"There is only one thing that troubles me," said Waring. "I'm afraid that a number of those Shawanoes are in the vicinity, and if we venture out, we run too great a risk of being seen."

"Begorra, but how are we going to manage it after all?" queried the Irishman, with great surprise.

"Wait until darkness, when we will run little chance of being seen by those who are evidently watching for us."

"And how will we find the way to the village, if you've no objection to tell us, as that long-legged Hezekiah used to say, when he asked a question of us?"

"Easy enough by following the river. As the

settlement is upon the banks of the Ohio, we surely shall discover it if we do not stray off into the woods."

"Begorra, but that's the plan fur yees."

It was decided that the best course was for them to be on the move at once, provided they could do so without incurring any additional danger. The way to the river appeared to be the least frequented by their foes, and his plan was to approach this as near as convenient, and follow closely its bank, keeping carefully under the cover of the shrubbery and dense undergrowth.

The river could be reached in half an hour at least, provided no unexpected obstacle should present itself, and, with Waring taking the lead, the three set out.

The gallant guide could not restrain his misgivings, as he cautiously stole through the woods, and, more than once, he debated with himself whether it was not best to turn back, and wait for the cover of darkness before attempting to reach the settlement.

They had gone scarcely half the distance, when a paint-bedaubed Shawano was discerned coming toward them. Signaling to those behind him, Waring sunk down to the ground, and, clutching the handle of his knife, breathlessly awaited his approach.

The head of the savage was bent, as though he were searching the ground for something, and he was walking slowly, little dreaming that the very ones he was so anxious to discover, were so nigh him. As fortunately, indeed for himself, as for the whites, he changed his direction, and, in a few moments, was out of sight.

The fugitives resumed their painfully laborious flight, and finally reached the river-bank, rejoiced enough that, as yet, their enemies had learned nothing of their whereabouts. Here, underneath the almost impervious undergrowth, they felt more at ease than they had since they had been joined by Waring.

"What time might it be?" asked the Irishman.

"Near the middle of the afternoon—if not later."

"We'll stay here then until night. What say ye?"

The proposal of Pat Mulroony coincided with what Waring deemed best for the party, and accordingly, it was determined to remain in their present position until night closed around them.

The few hours that yet remained ere the protecting darkness could come, were hours of the most painful suspense to the fugitives. Neither of them hardly dared to stir from his hiding-place, and when they conversed, it was only in the whispered words of fear.

It may well be a question, whether the Shawanoes were really searching for the whites, for it seemed barely possible that if such were the case, they could have helped finding the trail. It was more probable that the Indians had moved to this portion of the wood, and, those of their number who had been seen, were only wandering hither and thither, without any ostensible object.

Be that as it may, the sun was still in the heavens, when the sharp ears of Virginia Lander caught the sound of a footstep near them. Touching Waring on the shoulder, she communicated the startling fact to him, and he admonished the Irishman to maintain a strict silence.

It was soon evident that an Indian was close at hand, and that he was between the fugitives and the river—a position in which it was barely possible for him to pass them, without both parties discovering each other. It was manifest too, from the carelessness with which he was proceeding, that he had no suspicion of the proximity of the whites.

Soon, the form of the Shawano was discerned through the intricacies of the bushes, and the fugitives, sinking down to the earth, kept their eyes intently fixed upon him. From his manner, it was plain he was searching for something, although whether that something was our friends or some

other object, they had no means of determining. He kept his head down most of the time, occasionally looking up with a puzzled, curious expression, at which time, so close was he, that the black pupils of his basilisk eyes were plainly visible to the whites.

A remarkable fact in regard to this Indian was, that he had no rifle with him, and nothing except a knife carried in his girdle. This, however, did not make him a less dangerous personage to the fugitives, should they be discovered. A single yell from him would bring a horde of the red-skins upon them before even they could extricate themselves from the bushes which sheltered them.

What pen shall describe the emotions of the fugitives as they saw the Shawanoe lower his eyes, and gaze straight through the bushes at them—so straight, in fact, that Waring, who was nearest the river, felt confident that he was looking directly at him.

Still he uttered no sound, and gave no evidence that he had discovered anything unusual in the undergrowth before him, although Waring could not comprehend how such could be the case, for the gaze of the Indian was fixed steady and penetrating.

Suddenly the young man heard a movement behind him. He dared not turn his head, but he suspected the meaning of it. It was soon explained by the barrel of the Irishman's rifle appearing beside him.

"Whist, till I blow the haythen to the devil!" he whispered, as he cocked it.

Waring would not run the risk of reply; his words might be heard by other ears than those for which they were intended. He placed the muzzle of the gun against his side, and held it there firmly, so that it could not be discharged without killing him.

Pat Mulroony understood this mute appeal, and relinquished his intention of shooting the savage.

All at once, the Shawanoe gave forth a guttural "Ugh!" and approached the fugitives. Pat tugged at the rifle, but Waring would not loosen his grasp. Just as he was about to do so, under the belief that the critical moment had arrived, the Indian stopped and drew something from the bushes. Relief unspeakable! it was a canoe, and the whites still remained undiscovered.

Picking the frail vessel bodily from the ground, the Shawanoe carried it to the water's edge, when, depositing it in the water, he seated himself in it, and paddled away.

"That Indian had the narrowest escape of his life!" remarked Waring, when he had gone.

"Ye spake the truth there!" added Pat Mulroony, "and be the same token, ye had the same narry 'scape yerself. I was on the pint of aiming at the haythen several times *through you*, and letting daylight through ye both."

Virginia looked horror-struck at the words of the Irishman, noticing which, he whispered to her—so loud, however, that Waring also caught the words:

"It's only a joke, me leddy; I wouldn't hit the spalpeen to save his neck."

In the course of an hour or so, it began to grow dark, and the fugitives impatiently awaited the time when they could move from their hiding-place. With the exception of the Indian mentioned, they saw nothing of their enemies, although they occasionally heard a whoop or a halloo in the woods from them.

The sky, which up to noon had been clear and propitious, had become since then darkened and overcast, and gave every sign of a coming storm. Black, threatening clouds were swaying tumultuously across the heavens, and piling up in huge masses in the far-off horizon, where they towered like the walls of some old, embattled castle, around whose ramparts the serpentine lightning quivered like streams of blood. Faint murmurings of thunder were constantly borne upon the air, and the roaring of the wind in the forest sounded like the distant ocean.

The darkness came on earlier than usual, thus hastened by the marshaling of the storm-king's forces, and the three fugitives stole from the bushes, and commenced their journey toward the settlement.

The progress of the whites was necessarily slow, from the caution exercised. For a considerable distance Waring led the way, when he yielded to the earnest solicitation of Pat Mulroony, and allowed him to take the advance, while he fell behind, and joined Virginia.

"Keep up courage," he whispered to her. "We will soon be where we shall have fewer obstacles to oppose us."

"I am not tired," she replied. "Do not feel any anxiety upon my account."

The darkness had increased rapidly, and the whites began to take less care as they moved along. Quite a strong wind came up the river, and now and then the flashes of lightning were vivid enough to reveal the shore and stream to them, so that they were guided in a great measure by this means.

Waring was moving along, holding the hand of Virginia in his own, when he suddenly encountered the Irishman, who had stopped walking. He was about to demand the meaning of his acting thus, when he turned his head, and whispered:

"Whist! I saan something then."

"In what form did it appear?"

"Look straight over me shoulder, and when the lightning shows itself ag'in, tell me what ye saas."

Waring did as requested. The lightning was incessant, but not sharp enough to reveal the object that had attracted the notice of his companion. All at once, however, a bright flame blazed out, and he saw, but a rod or two away, an Indian seated in a canoe. The canoe lay close under the bank, and the savage was seated in the stern, with his back toward the whites, and, from his appearance, was evidently waiting for some one.

Waring felt sure that he was the Shawanoe that had caused them so much alarm, and that, from his presence in this quarter, it was pretty certain his companions were not far distant. While debating with himself upon the best course for him safely to pass him, he felt the Irishman moving away from him.

"What do you intend to do?" he asked, as he arrested him.

"Get that same canoe."

"Get that canoe? What do you mean? How are you going to do it?"

"Let me alone for that. I'll upset the haythen."

"His friends may be closer at hand than you think."

"Divil a bit does I care how close they be. I'll settle this matter with him."

"Well, go on, but be careful."

The great convenience and advantage the canoe would be to the whites, decided Waring to let the Irishman make an effort to gain possession of it.

Having warned him of the danger he ran, he trusted he had sense enough to use all caution possible in the case. Nevertheless, it was with some misgivings that he saw him glide away, and disappear in the darkness.

The flash of lightning which had revealed the solitary Indian to the Irishman, had brought his appearance and situation so vividly to his sight, that he could constantly see him, and felt as much assurance in moving toward him as if it were broad daylight.

Step by step he approached, literally feeling every inch of the way, for a single misstep would prove fatal. The snapping of a twig, a slip of his foot in the water, and the vigilant Indian would be on his guard.

Closer and closer approached the Irishman, until he had gained the proper point. Then straightening himself up, he drew back his ponderous fist, and concentrating all his strength, gave him a blow that sent him heels over head out into the water.

"That's what I call a gentle hint fur yees to l'ave."

A few moments later, the party were in the boat, and gliding rapidly with the current.

After floating a few moments in silence, Waring said:

"You and Hezekiah never knew each other until a few days since, I believe."

"No; nor we don't know each other yit."

"He was a singular character, too—odd and eccentric; but as true and faithful as steel. He made a terrible fight before he gave up to those savages. It seems as though I am partly responsible for his death."

"Hillo!" exclaimed the Irishman. "Look yonder jist!"

As he spoke, he pointed down-stream. The canoe had just rounded a bend in the river, and a large camp-fire was visible upon the Kentucky side. It was so large and vigorous, that its light was thrown clear across upon the other bank, the surface of the water glistened like silver. Through this broad band of light, it was necessary, of course, that the fugitives pass, and run a second risk of discovery.

The lightning had almost ceased, but a strong wind was blowing, and the huge flame of the camp-fire could be seen surging to and fro, like the waves of a tempest-tossed sea. Dark figures now and then passed between it and the river, and their huge, grotesque shadows quivered on the surface, like monstrous phantoms.

Slowly and noiselessly, the canoe drifted into the broad belt of light, and the fugitives almost held their breath.

The eyes of Waring and Pat Mulroony were naturally fixed upon the camp-fire and its surroundings, but, from some cause which she could never explain, Virginia felt an apprehension, which amounted to a certainty, that all was not right upon the bank which was so near to them, and she kept her gaze fixed in that direction.

And while thus looking, she discovered, plainly and distinctly, the form of a tall Indian, standing upon the very edge of the river, seemingly intent upon watching the canoe. He did not move, or make any demonstration toward its occupants, and remained perfectly motionless until he had faded out of sight in the darkness.

As the fugitives reached the protecting darkness again, confident that they had not been discovered, Waring drew a sigh of relief, and said:

"We need have no fear now. That fire has never been started by the Shawanoes with the intention of receiving any assistance from it in recapturing us. I think I may safely say we are out of all danger."

"I feel so relieved," said Virginia. "It seems as though I had suffered a hundred deaths since that dreadful night. How soon may we expect to reach the settlement, Luther?"

"I cannot tell you precisely, but in three hours, I should say, at the furthest. What do you think, Pat?"

"Never having been in this region, I find it rather difficult to answer your question, as the minister said, when the old woman axed him how Jonah felt in the whale's belly."

"I forgot; you told me that before. However, I cannot be far out of the way in my guess."

"Is it not singular, Luther, that, if we are so close to the village, these Indians also should be?"

"Not at all. I have no doubt that there are hundreds within half a mile of it. On an exposed frontier it is always thus. Without good defenses, brave hearts, and trusty rifles such a place would not be safe from destruction for a single hour."

"Whisht!" interrupted the Irishman. "If I didn't hear the tramp of one of the haythens on shore, I'll never tip another shillalah!"

"I heard it, too—the snapping of a twig," added Virginia.

"The same, jist—one of the dogs is follying us."

"That is not probable. What could he gain by such a course?"

"L'arn the way to that sittlement of which yees were sp'aking."

"I should not wonder if Pat were right," said Virginia. "I have heard evidence of his presence several times."

"Let us listen. The wind may have made all the sounds you have heard."

For the space of fifteen or twenty minutes the whites maintained silence, but there was nothing heard further, and they fell to conversing again.

The situation of our friends, although not without the grand comforter, hope, was still gloomy and impressive. On either hand, the dark, frowning forests loomed up, and the wind sighing through them made wildly-inournful music—now roaring like a hurricane, and then dying away in a hollow, desolate moaning. Occasionally the sharp scream of some wild animal was borne forward upon the night wind, and once or twice the reports of rifles showed that the Indian, the far wilder animal of the two, was "abroad upon the night."

The wind raised small waves upon the surface of the river, and they rippled along the shore, and around the projecting roots of the trees that grew upon the banks. Even their own voices sounded differently upon this wild night. But they were sustained by the prospect of speedy deliverance and shelter, and were more hopeful than they had been since their first memorable disaster.

In the course of half an hour the river made another bend, and the wind now blew directly up-stream. The onward motion of the canoe grew less and less, and finally it stopped altogether.

"This will never do," said Waring, when he had satisfied himself how matters stood. "It will be a long while before we reach the settlement at this rate."

"Let's put in to shore, and scare up some kind of paddle for each of us to go to work with."

"I am afraid that we could not accomplish much, Pat; the only course is for us to land, and make the rest of the journey on foot. Do you feel able to walk a mile or two, Virginia?"

"Walk a mile or two?" she repeated. "If necessary, a dozen of them, when cheered by the hope of it animates us!"

"A noble girl! Help me in with the canoe, then, Pat!"

Using their hands vigorously, as they had done once or twice before, the boat gradually approached the shore, until it had run in under the limb of a tree, which was seized by Pat, and held while the other two disembarked. Then kicking the canoe from beneath him, the Irishman also sprang to land and stood among his friends.

"Shall we kape close to the wather, or off from it always?" he asked.

"The undergrowth seems to be the densest by the river, and as I see no need of remaining by it, we will go further into the woods, where it will be less difficult to walk."

Accordingly the three moved further away, where the wood was more open, and for some time they encountered little obstruction in their journeying. The Irishman, as usual, brought up the rear, now and then giving vent to some original remark, and occasionally indulging in snatches of song.

Waring was about to speak to his companion, when he felt her grasp his arm with incredible power, and startled nearly out of his senses, he turned toward her:

"What's the matter, Virginia?" he asked.

"Oh!" she gasped in a tremor, "I saw that Indian just now."

"Where?"

"Here, right beside me."

"Did you see him, Pat?" asked Waring, grasping his rifle and peering round in the darkness.

"No, but I heard the hay—"

"There! there he is again!" she interrupted, pointing in front of them.

Waring caught a glimpse of a dark form and ere he could precisely locate it, he saw Pat Mulroony bound forward like a ball, and the next instant the two were grappled together in a hand-to-hand struggle.

The impetuous onslaught of the Irishman was irresistible, and he bore his opponent to the ground and seated himself astride of him. Whipping out his knife, he fairly shrieked:

"Say yer prayers, quick, for you've got only a second and a half to say 'em in!"

"If you've no objection, I should like to know why ye can't give a little longer time?" asked the familiar, whining voice of Hezekiah Smith.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was no mistaking the voice. It was Hezekiah Smith himself, beyond a doubt. Stooping down so as to obtain a glimpse of his features, the Irishman peered into his face for a moment.

"It's that long-legged chap as was killed, or else I ain't Pat Mulroony!"

"Is it possible that that is you?" asked Waring, placing his hand upon his shoulder, and feeling of his face and arms.

"I've a strong suspicion now that I'm the indentical, and precisely the same personage that you took so much pains to kiver up in that same gorge," replied Hezekiah.

"Let us strike a fire, and sit down and have a talk," said Waring. "This is too good fortune, indeed."

Branches and twigs were soon collected, and a fire started. Seating themselves by it, the reunited friends gazed into each other's faces. To the surprise of all, Hezekiah Smith was attired in the dress of a Shawanoe Indian.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Waring, pointing at his costume.

"A stroke of my genius," replied the New Englander; "considered as an idea original with myself, I think it reflects credit upon me."

"But let us hear the particulars of your escape."

"They don't amount to much," said Hezekiah.

"The p'int is just here. You know I had an all-fired row on that precipice. Drat me, if that wa'n't the greatest scrape I ever got into in all my life. I dug, and kicked, and pulled, and twisted, and gouged, and bit, and rolled with that last Injun, but it wa'r't no use. When he went over, I had to go over, too. Well, there! it was *sublime*, spinning down through the dizzy air with that Shawanoe fast to me! I had more ecstasy in them one or two seconds, then I've had in all the rest of my life."

"As it happened, the Injin fell under me, and was knocked into a jelly, though, for that matter, I had settled his bash for him before he went over. I'd advise you to believe now that I was bruised slightly, and for a few minutes I seen nothing but stars, and heard nothing but the queerest kind of music in my head."

"When I came to myself somebody was drawing me along the ground. Thinking as how it must be one of the dratted imps, I just kept my eyes shet, and let him pull away. Bimeby he let me drap, and piled me over with dirt and stones. I heard him mutter something, but I kept my eyes closed up all the time; he never thought I was playing 'possum."

"Arter he'd been gone some time, it struck me all at once that it had been you who had taken sich pains with me. You'd better believe I opened my eyes then, and crawled out of that place in a hurry. The way the stones and dirt flew, you'd have thought a barrel of powder had been tetch'd off."

"But you'd been gone too long fur me to find you, though I tried hard enough to do it. I follered you a good ways into the woods, and had to give it up at last. I leaned up ag'in' a tree, and was thinking about it—"

"That was you, then, Pat and I saw, and he wanted to shoot so bad. You had a narrow escape."

"I s'pose it was me. I soon found the red-skins was too thick in them parts, so I crept down by the river, and waited fur night. Some time after dark, I heerd one of the scamps screech, followed by the crack of their rifles. I knowed you must be in some scrape, so I hurried down the river, but couldn't see anything of you. Walking down the bank some minutes arter, I thought I heard somebody speak on the rive', so I kept going down the shore, and listenin' like."

"Opposite where that big fire was, I seen the canoe, but there was three persons in it. I couldn't understand how that could be, and was afraid to show myself."

"I saw you, said Virginia, smiling, "but I told no one of it."

"I kept along by you, howsumever, and at last seen you land."

"You must have known us, then, surely."

"Yes, I did; but just for a little fun, I thought I'd scare you a bit, and, by thunder, I reckon it was me that got the most scart, when Pat pounced upon me out there."

"But you have not told us about this Indian dress."

"I forgot that. It struck me that, being there was so many Injins about, it would be a good idea to put on one of their dresses. It might come handy, you know. One of the dead red-skins was just my size, and I changed costumes with him, leaving him, of course, to put the clothes on for himself, as I did with them I got. I believe they have kept me out of danger several times since I put them on. But now about this fire burning here? Ain't there some danger of its being seen?"

"I took pains to screen it from observation, and I have no fears," replied Waring. "I tell you what I propose," he added. "The woods are so dark, and as none of us know the way, it is more likely that we shall be entirely lost if we keep on in this manner. Suppose, therefore, we spend the night here!"

This proposal being agreed to by all, the preparations were made for carrying it out. A couch of boughs and leaves was made near the fire for Virginia, upon which a blanket or two were spread, and upon which, a few minutes later, the wearied and exhausted girl was sound asleep. The others seated themselves around the fire, to spend several hours in chatting and conversation.

"A few hours ago," said Waring, addressing Pat Mulroony, "you were on the point of explaining something in regard to yourself, when you were interrupted by the discovery of a new danger. Perhaps, while we are seated here, you'll give us the reason that induced you to come into this wild country."

The Irishman smiled:

"It's little I have to tell, as the deaf and dumb man said. It's thrue I niver have been out in these parts before; but I've thraveled over considerable of the wilderness in the last few years. You know there be signs of another Injin war, and I've been sint here as a private agent of Mad Anthony, to l'arn what is to be l'arned."

"That's what I am!" exclaimed Hezekiah Smith.

Seeing that his hearers appeared incredulous, Smith added:

"Such is the fact. I had a love adventure at home, which sent me out here, and that's why I'm rather green. I was sent in these parts at my special request."

"Begorra, but we goes together after this," said Pat Mulroony.

The two grasped hands.

"It strikes me," said Hezekiah Smith, "that while we've l'arned considerable of these red-skins, it ain't quite enough to suit the general. I propose, therefore, we start out ag'in."

Despite Waring's protestations, these two eccen-

trick individuals insisted upon departing at once. Although much bruised, Hezekiah would not consent to go to the settlement, until he could fully recover, nor would he allow Virginia Lander to be awakened, in order to bid him good-by. Assuring him whom they left behind, that he should hear from them again, the two worthies arose, and passed out in the darkness together.

At the earliest sign of day, our hero and heroine were again *en route*, and in the course of an hour, came in sight of the settlement. Their destination—the long wished and prayed for goal—was reached. Painful and terrible had been their sufferings on the way, but they had been rewarded at last. Arm-in-arm the two entered this village of the wilderness, as hand-in-hand they entered upon the great journey of life, and went up the hill-side, and, finally, down through the Lark Valley into the eternal life beyond.

THE END.

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